

PROPHETHOOD

IN

**ISLAM**

ABDUL HAMEED SIDDIQUI

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ  
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَمِنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ  
كُلٌّ أَمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ

(سورة البقرة: ٢٨٢)

## CONTENTS

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| The Necessity of Prophethood                        | .... 7   |
| The Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him).... | 45       |
| The Finality of Prophethood                         | .... 73  |
| Index   | .... 105 |

## THE NECESSITY OF PROPHETHOOD

FOR thousands of years, from the earliest dim beginnings of human consciousness, man has been longing to comprehend Reality and adjust himself to its demands.

"From the primitive kneeling before some supposedly sacred tree or holy stone, thrilled with the thought that somewhere at the back of perceived phenomena has, and vibrates a force, a power beyond his knowing, into contact with which he must somehow come down to the great faiths of today!" man has always felt that there is a Great Reality, behind and beyond and within shifting panorama of nature and history.

One may not like to stand inside the cloistered walls of the traditional forms of religion, yet faith is a dire necessity. What Kant says of metaphysics, "that it is an instinct which we cannot destroy, however much its successful achievement may be denied,"<sup>2</sup> is also true of religion. This quest for Reality cannot be banished from human nature. To live without this urge is impossible. If nature has the horror of a vacuum, the human soul has the fear of emptiness. "Man must have and will have some religion," Says Blake: "If he has not the religion of Jesus he will have the religion of Satan and

---

1. S. Radhakrishnan. *The Religion We Need*, London, 1928.

2. E. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. He further says:

"That the human mind will ever give up metaphysical researches entirely is a little to be expected as that we should prefer to give up breathing altogether to avoid inhaling impure air. There will, therefore, always be metaphysics in the world, nay, everyone; especially every man of reflection will have it for himself after his own pattern" (Mahaffy's English translation, p. 138).

will erect the synagogue of Satan, calling the prince of this world God and destroying all who do not worship Satan under the name of God.”<sup>3</sup>

The search for Reality is not, thus, something which is a matter of option or choice for the human mind. You cannot point to a single human action which can be comprehended without seeing its relevance to the world of Reality. Despite all changes and disguises—of myth, legend, and symbol—the fact remains that the consciousness of human race has always been grappling with Reality.

Man has, however, to grasp Reality by different means: by intuition, then by reason, again by feeling and poetic imagination or fancy, and yet again by observation and experimentation. At other times he receives it passively, as simply given on authority. The fact is that every faculty of human nature has stirred up successively—for better or worse—to apprehend and interpret this Reality. The organic consciousness of the human race may be said to have wrestled with it from the dawn of time; “very often it has added to it: as often it has taken from it. In its wonder, it has devised multitudinous legends regarding it: in its credulity it has mingled fable with fact, and sometimes mistaken the one for the other. In its reverence it has waited passively for messages from the unseen, some of which have been authentic, but throughout its whole career and in every stage of its evolution, it has sought a knowledge of creative, all-embracing Power, and has desired some sort of union with it.”<sup>4</sup>

The scientists, the philosophers, the mystics, and the religious thinkers have all, thus, tried to comprehend this Great Power and then to show us the way to be in spiritual

---

3. *Jerusalem*, Blake, pp 52-53, quoted by S. Radhakrishnan in *Recovery of Faith*, New York, p. 40.

4. William Knight, *Aspects of Theism*, 1893, p. 116.

accord with His demands. But a careful scrutiny of the claims of all these great leaders of human thought clearly reveals that observation, intellect, and feeling, unaided by revelation, provide only a partial and one-sided snapshot of Reality and miss its full significance and implication.

Let us first consider the claims of the scientists with regard to the solution of the mysteries of Reality. Science has become the golden word of modernity. Everywhere and every day we are being told by a certain class of intellectuals that science is to take the place of worn-out religious systems and that it would teach man to comprehend Reality only with the help of observation and experimentation, thus helping him evolve new standards of morality without any metaphysical sanction.

Now, this *naïve* optimism with regard to physical sciences seems to be quite unjust. Undoubtedly, science has tried to get rid of drudgery and want and has dismantled the barriers of time and space. Besides its material achievements towards a better world, science has also helped to introduce and develop disciplined investigation in all branches of human knowledge. All this is true. But there is no gainsaying the fact that the deterministic science is unable to fulfil the spiritual hopes attached to it in the recent past; for, the more our researches advance, the more incomprehensible and complicated become the mysteries of Reality. It has its own limitations. The scientific account of life is convincing only to a certain extent, but when it deals with spiritual and moral problems, the state of affairs seems to be quite unsatisfactory.

The so-called scientific methods are inadequate in that (a) they tend to reduce the whole life of man to a mere function of matter; (b) they indiscriminately employ the law of mechanical causality as the master-key to all the phenomena of the world.

So accustomed have the scientists become to look upon the material world around them as the real world that the terms "matter" and "real" seem to have become synonyms. "Matter, rigged out in those attributes of colour, texture and form which it borrows from our senses, has taken the centre of the stage, and thought and consciousness, the other actors in life cast, are given only subsidiary parts to play."<sup>5</sup> The scientist is primarily concerned with the simplest explanation of quantitative sense-data. But it is not always true that the sense-impressions correspond exactly to the external Reality. For instance, some people see colours differently from others; they are colour-blind. Similarly, when we press a ball by the index and middle fingers, crossed one over the other, and roll it we feel not one but two balls. A sensorial impression of things, therefore, does not enable us to conclude that Reality is identical with perception. "Reasoning and experience must intervene to correct the direct impression of senses and to construct in our brains a picture which corresponds to what we call the external world, the objective world, in opposition to the subjective idea which is the result of the information given by the senses."<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, even if we were to set aside for a moment this objection there is another fallacy in the so-called scientific reasoning. Science describes facts, objects, and phenomena, and tries to join them by what we call laws, so as to be able to predict future events. We cannot start our investigation with bare, self-identical, objective facts, stripped of every ideal element or contribution from thought. "The least and the lowest fact of outward observation is not an independent entity—fact minus mind, and out of which mind may, somehow or other, be seen to emerge; but it is

---

5. Kenneth Walker, *Meaning and Purpose*, p. 12.

6. Lecomte du Nouy, *Human Destiny*, New American Library, New York, 1949, p. 16.

fact or object, as it appears to an observing mind in the medium of thought having mind or thought as an inseparable factor of it.”<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the so-called scientific laws are conditioned by the structure of our brains and express the succession of the states of consciousness of our sensorial impressions. “They are a *posteriori* and are relative to man who is the thinking-recording instrument, and merely express the relationship, or a series of relationships, between him and the external cause.”<sup>8</sup> What we call scientific knowledge is nothing but the sensorial impressions of the objects which come within the grasp of our senses. It is possible that this impression may or may not correspond to external reality, because it depends entirely on man, who is the receiving set, the recording instrument, and the co-ordinator. We can thus say that the great majority—if not all—of the phenomena studied are in reality derived from the combination: experimenter (man) and objective phenomenon. It thus becomes clear that the world of matter, as it prefigured in our consciousness, is a mental construction, and it depends upon our capacity to abstract artificially a small portion out of the manifold and rich texture of Reality and our power of generalising on the basis of the abstraction by inductive method.

Moreover, a scientist covers a vast field of knowledge, not with the help of observation and experimentation, but with the help of inference which is a function of thought. He is, thus, constantly depending upon some unifying, concentrating power amidst the flux of impression in order to reclaim his observations from chaos, to identify, relate, compare, and co-ordinate them with coherent objects of knowledge. “And this constant amidst the variable, this unifying power is, and can only be, that spiritual self, that self-

---

7. John Caird, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, Glasgow, 1894. p. 89.

8. Lecomte du Nouy, *op. cit.*, p. 23.



conscious ego, which is not given by sense, which is not in this or that sensation, but common to all sensations, to which they are each and all referred, and which locks them together in the unity of thought.”<sup>9</sup> The fact of the matter is that we have to postulate a spiritual self; otherwise it is impossible to explain the order observable in our own perception of the physical world.

To illustrate this briefly, let it be conceded, for the sake of argument, that all our knowledge of nature is derived from experience. “But experience involves something that is not given in sensation and without which experience itself could not exist. It is by our organs of sense that we can converse with nature. The utmost, however, which, by their means, we can attain is simply isolated and transient sensations. But isolated sensations are not knowledge. If this were all, our consciousness would be but the stage athwart which flitted an endless series of fugitive impressions.”<sup>10</sup> No repetition or reproduction could make these dumb phantoms articulate and bring order in them. The power which makes them articulate and unifies them in a system and then fits this system in the whole life scheme is the higher consciousness in man which enables him to interpret his complete life.

Now, the interpretation of the whole life is not our option. We are always seeking, consciously or unconsciously, the right interpretation of the right whole-response. Science, as we know, is built on patient, non-committed waiting until all the evidence is thoroughly interpreted and tested. The observation must decide. If the facts observed are not decisive and clear, the scientist must take no definite decision till he finds out, with the help of experiment, what they are. But the experiences of life show that we cannot afford to spend a single second in mental vacuum. We are

---

9. Lecomte du Nouy, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92.

10. John Caird, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

always believing, always acting, always deciding. In other words, at every moment of active life, we are bound to make whole-responses. There is no help to it. Whenever we do anything worth-while at all, we are deciding on what is most real and most important. Whatever may be the range of our scientific knowledge, science cannot deliver a verdict on the problems of "most real and most important," since these depend upon the question of "whole-responses," which falls outside the scope of science. Science is concerned with observable facts, that is to say, the optically present source of sensation, which forms a fraction of man's life and has nothing definite to say about that Unseen Reality from which radiate incessantly the rays of his "whole-responses". "It is indeed a matter of great surprise that a materialist, while supposing himself to be dealing with hard material facts and experiences, is found employing such abstractions as force, law, matter, as if they were on the same level with sensuous things, and treating them in his investigations and reasonings as real entities immediately given, apart from the activity of thought to which they truly belong. Or again, while condemning all that is supersensible he is continually using and cannot advance a single step without using— though often in a haphazard and uncritical manner—such categories as unity, multiplicity, identity, difference, cause, effect, substance, properties, etc., which are purely metaphysical forms, unconsciously adopted without warrant or justification. The materialist is, in short, and cannot help being, an unconscious metaphysician."<sup>11</sup>

We have now to consider the principle of causality on which rises the whole structure of scientific knowledge. The principle of physical causality implies that the outward things are connected in an ordered system by the notion of cause and effect. This theory in fact rests on the belief in the

---

11. John Caird, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91.

uniformity of nature which signifies that regular co-existence and succession of phenomena exist in the universe; that there are sequences which are not arbitrary but invariable, linked together by a bond of absolute necessity, is a foregone presumption in every investigation or experimentation by which we seek to discover changes.

But when we analyse this causality, we pass imperceptibly from the material realm into the philosophical and religious realms. The famous author of *Human Destiny* has illustrated this point by giving us the example of a cannon shot. " Shall we say," he writes, "the firing of the shell is caused by the small percussion cap, or by the movement of the soldier's hand which has pulled the string? Shall we say that the cause is the charge of powder? But without the movement of the hand this charge could have remained inert for centuries. Anyway, the movement of the hand can be replaced by a different mechanism and the explosion of the percussion cap could have been brought about by very slight action, such as, for instance, the momentary interception of a feeble ray of light by the wing of a fly. This ray of light might have been chosen from among the stars, by means of telescope, and would suffice, after amplification, to project the ton of steel which the shell weighs, about thirty miles. The Chicago exposition in 1937 was thus entirely lighted by the closing of an enormous switch commanded by a weak ray of light emitted forty years earlier by the star Aracturus. As far as the cannon shot is concerned, it would seem absurd to make the star responsible for the damage done by the shell, and yet this slight ray of light emitted long before will have played as important a part in the shooting as the charge of powder."<sup>12</sup>

Now, this charge of the shot can be attributed neither to the workers who manufactured the powder, nor to the

---

12. Lecomte, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

engineers who invented it, nor to the builders of the factory, nor to the capitalists, but to the motives which led to the manufacture of the gun and powder. "Without them there would have been no shell, no cannon, no charge, no percussion cap, no shooter and no continuity of coordinated effort with the aim of making the shot go off."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, from the material point of view, the cause, in the words of Imam Ghazali, is "a mere precedence; it is only an order of succession."

When we try to analyse the "cause" which in itself is the result of several series of extraordinarily complex causes, we find ourselves confronted with a problem which compels us to transcend both the material world and the phenomenal sphere. The sciences disclose only the manifold changes, phenomena succeeding phenomena. These sciences, however, fail to explain how it comes about that the phenomena are made to succeed one another. The sequence of phenomena simply tells us that an everlasting process is at work; but were we to carry back our regress *ad infinitum*, we would never get within sight of the problem as to how any one phenomenon caused another to succeed.

To take a particular illustration, if we go back to the motion of the planetary bodies, we find that they all move in an elliptical orbit, like satellites around the sun. This is vaguely explained to be due to the law of gravitation. It is intelligible to ask: what caused the gravitation to act as it does? How did it come about that rotatory motion was originally given to the primitive matter of the universe when it condensed from a gaseous to a fluid state and thence to a solid state? These are the questions which cannot be answered satisfactorily by merely saying that the forces of the universe contain their explanation within themselves.

---

13. Ibid, p. 18.

that they are self-adjusting, self-determining, and self-directing. This is no valid explanation since it presupposes the primary atoms to be endowed with self-consciousness. Even if we presume that atoms are possessed of self-consciousness, the difficulty still remains in our understanding of "the action of atom upon atom—their reciprocal energy—or the interaction of the various units in the vast republic of self-conscious powers." How is it that a vast number of atoms could mould and combine themselves into a single orderly system? We must be informed how the universe came to be a universe—how it came to have unity which underlies its diversity—if it resulted from a countless multitude of self-adjusting atoms. Did the atoms take a counsel together and devise a common plan and work it out in combination? Grant all the atoms of matter to be conscious, grant all the properties and forces which the scientists generally claim for them, the question still remains unanswered. Why would the independent atoms give rise to anything entitled to be called universe? Science can find no satisfactory answer to any one of these questions.

In our attempt to penetrate the underlying motives and actions behind the universe, we enter into a region which transcends physical phenomena. This is the reason why a materialist ultimately falls back on chance—a very important admission as to the limits of the so-called scientific knowledge and the possibility of another knowledge unknown to science and altogether different from that with the help of which we observe physical phenomena and their laws. It is a highly unscientific attitude to apply the principle of causality as it suits one's purpose and then dismiss it when it fails to support one's contention. Thus the addition of a metaphysical link to the causal chain is not contrary to logic: it is rather perfectly in accordance with the attitude of modern scientific thought.

The scientists claim that the phenomena are not only linked up in a chain of antecedence and sequence, but there is convertibility at every step. If phenomenon "A" really produces phenomenon "B", "A" must be, phenomenally, quite distinct from "B". It is, therefore, quite logical to view this finite and relative world to be the outcome of the Planning Will of an Infinite and Absolute Being, and that may be regarded as its First Cause. The very idea of finitude and our consciousness of it is, in fact, the recognition of Reality which is, not only independent of our sensorial observation and psychological consciousness, but is far richer and vastly different from any image of it that we might succeed in recreating from our understanding of it.

Science is better fitted to explain systematically the physical phenomena, but it cannot prescribe rules for human guidance.

The scientists cannot tell why the things are created at all, or, in other words, they cannot endow either the activity of nature or that of man with any meaning. The fact is that the "why" which is of such immense human significance is, if anything, an embarrassment to the scientist, for it is his aim to approach everything, which he studies, as impersonally as possible. He believes that he will be able to give an objective account of what he is studying only if he, on the one hand, strips himself naked of all the more obviously human qualities and predilections, and, on the other, confines his study and observation to areas where law, or uninterrupted regularity of occurrence, is of the very nature of things to the point of being assumed as an ideal and actual condition. Thus mechanism is not a necessary assumption of science; it is a logical tendency, an ideal working presupposition. "Two conclusions," says Professor Whitehead, "are now abundantly clear. One is that sense-perception omits any discrimination of the fundamental activities within Nature. The second conclusion is the failure, especially of science, to

endow its formulae for activity with any meaning. Science conceived as resting on mere sense-perception, with no other source of observation, is bankrupt, so far as concerns its claim to self-sufficiency. Science can find no individual enjoyment in nature. Science can find no aim in nature. Science can find no creativity in nature: it finds mere rules of succession. These negations are true of Natural Science. They are inherent in its methodology.... Such science only deals with half the evidence."<sup>14</sup>

But although the word "purpose" has been carefully removed from the scientists' official vocabulary, it is a far more difficult matter to eliminate the idea of purpose from his mind. The scientist may try to look upon himself as an impersonal engineer who is discovering how a machine works, but even an engineer may find that the idea of purpose obtrudes itself when he starts to study the inter-relations of its several parts. The fact is that we are "directly conscious of our purposes as directive of our action." Purpose is as much a matter of primary experience as freedom. The scientist may not recognise purpose in method; he has excluded it. That seems to be well for his purposes. But we should understand that the universe, construed solely in terms of causation of physical interconnections, is a sheer insoluble contradiction. We have to go into the "whys" beyond the "hows" and the "whats," if we are anxious to solve the riddle of the universe. We simply cannot ignore the presence of purpose and the question of worthy ends—matters which the scientists have rightly declared to be outside the scope of science.

Be that as it may, one thing is clear: science as such is unable to fulfil the spiritual hopes attached to it in the modern age. It gives us information only about inorganic world—the

---

14. *Modes of Thought*, pp. 210-11.

world which can be observed and seen—but when we come to the problems of inwardness, of spiritual decision, of moral freedom of the spirit, we find that science gives us no satisfactory answers. It ignores the most vital part of our life, the part which deals with inner motivation and makes our activities meaningful and purposive. This is the reason why “science can and is being made into an escapist philosophy, into a dodge of moral disciplines and spiritual responsibilities without which no life can be full and satisfactory and without which society is bound to meet ever new disasters.”<sup>15</sup> “Thus, wholly overshadowed by the results of his intellectual activity,” says Iqbal, “the modern man has ceased to live soulfully, i.e., from within. In the domain of thought he is living in open conflict with himself; and in the domain of economic and political life, he is living in open conflict with others. He finds himself unable to control his ruthless egoism and his infinite gold hunger which is gradually killing all higher striving in him and bringing him nothing but life—weariness. Absorbed in the fact, that is, the optically present source of sensation, he is entirely cut off from the unplumbed depths of his own being. In the wake of his systematic materialism has at last come that paralysis of energy which Huxley apprehended and deplored.”<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the scientific method cannot help us solve the problem of “whence” and “whither”. There is always an urge in our hearts to peep across this life hemmed in by space and time, and find out our ultimate destiny. Since science deals with the “actual,” with what is here and now, particularly what can be comprehended with the help of senses, there is inherent in science a natural tendency to assure that man too, like inanimate matter, is a bubble that bursts and a vision

---

15. Nels F.S. Ferre, *Faith and Reason*, New York, 1946, p. 83.

16. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore, 1962, pp. 187-88.



that fades and, thus, nothing survives after his death. If we take this view, the whole of the human life in which man plays such a prominent part becomes a meaningless riddle, nay, nothing short of a cruel joke. The more thoroughly we try to comprehend man, the more likely we are to feel that to deny the everlasting persistence of the spiritual yearning in him is to deprive his role of its real significance. "Life with its intense feeling of spontaneity constitutes a centre of indetermination, and thus falls outside the domain of necessity.... The biologist who seeks a mechanical explanation of life is led to do so because he confines his study to the lower forms of life whose behaviour discloses resemblances to mechanical action. If he studies life as manifested in himself, i.e., his own mind, freely choosing, rejecting, reflecting, surveying the past and present, and dynamically imagining the future, he is sure to be convinced of the inadequacy of his mechanical concepts."<sup>17</sup>

Science has, in fact, failed to acquaint man with his ultimate destiny and has, therefore, become a serious handicap to the harmonious development of the human race of our times. The logical tendency towards clarity, exactitude, and demonstrability, possessed by natural sciences, has constituted a strong temptation to oversimplification in the field of social sciences. The experts of social sciences, therefore, concentrated their attention on the study of such material as could be conveniently analysed and generalised in the fashion of physical science and thus thwarted humanity by their dogmatic *a priori* of facts. The exactitude with which the scientist works is obtained by narrowing the field of his inquiry. He makes use of very limited concepts and the results which he obtains are therefore of an equally limited nature. "The scientist may be likened to the man," says Kenneth Walker, "who travels

---

17. Muhammad Iqbal, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

along a well-marked road, looking neither to the right nor to the left and without raising his eyes from the ground. All travellers by this road have been warned to listen only to the voice of intellect, to pay no heed to the promptings of emotions, and to avoid as much as possible the use of concepts of a psychological nature. In this way, and in this way only, does he believe that it is possible for a man to reach the truth. A note of austerity can usually be detected in his voice when he describes to a layman what is called the scientific method and at such times his face is likely to assume a stern expression, such as one imagines that the face of a desert father must often have worn when admonishing his disciples to guard against the viles of devil. 'Believe nothing that you cannot prove,' he seems to say, "accept nothing that you cannot measure, and, above all, turn a deaf ear to the spacious words of the heart."<sup>18</sup>

This so-called scientific attitude, that is, the attitude of denial of everything which cannot be observed and measured, has resulted in a moral chaos in the world of today. "Science has given us powers fit for the gods," says Professor C.E.M. Joad, "and to their use, we bring the mentality of school boys and savages."<sup>19</sup> When frantic efforts are made to solve the moral and social problems according to the method and standard of natural sciences, some of the very important sectors of human life are bound to remain ignored, because man is not a mere "complex of electrons and protons and animal organism, merely a reflex mechanism", but he is a being, having a certain measure of will and freedom, having moral consciousness, and a feeling of the infinite which upholds him by its imperishable power. However, since these regions lie far beyond the reach of the natural sciences, the scientists and the social experts have

---

18. Kenneth Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-97.

19. *Guide to Modern Wickedness*, London, p. 261.

lost sight of them. "We have acknowledge," says Eddington, "that the entities of Physics can from their very nature form only a partial aspect of the reality. How are we to deal with other parts? It cannot be said that the other part concerns us less than the physical entities. Feeling, purpose, values, make up our consciousness as much as sense-impressions; we follow up the sense impressions and find that they lead into an external world discussed by science; we follow up the other elements of our being and find that they lead not into a world of Space and Time, but surely somewhere else."<sup>20</sup>

It is in this world where we are led "somewhere else" that we learn primary truths, the truths which do not reach us through the avenues of senses.

Here our consciousness traverses a wider area and attests much more than what belongs to the realm of sense-experience. The natural sciences have nothing definite to say about this world. By their very nature they are incapable of exploring this region. It has, therefore, remained quite neglected with the result that more than due emphasis has been laid on the material aspect of human life and this, in turn, accounts for the lopsided development of the human race in recent centuries. "Modern civilization," says the well-known author of the famous book *Man the Unknown*, "finds itself in a difficult position because it does not suit us. It has been erected without any knowledge of our real nature. It was born from the whims of scientific discoveries, from the appetites of men, their illusions, their theories and their desires. Although constructed by our efforts, it is not adjusted to our size and shape."<sup>21</sup> The learned writer then gives reasons for this disparity between the power and progress of man. His observations are very sound and clearly

---

20. *Science and the Unseen World*, cited in Iqbal, op. cit., p. 186.

21. Alexis Carrel, *Man the Unknown*, Pelican Series, 1948, p. 34.

point out the failure of natural sciences in solving the problems of human life. He tells us that material progress leads to wasted physical resources, to unbalanced and sick minds, and to weary and frustrated spirits. The achievements in the material realm are all to the good. But it need not lead one to suppose that control over physical processes will itself solve the problems of mind and spirit. If science is made into an idol so that neither the presuppositions on which it rests are scrutinised nor its inherent limitations are realised, it is bound to land humanity into one catastrophe after the other. "In truth," observes Carrel, "pure science never directly brings us any harm. But when its fascinating beauty dominates our minds and enslaves our thoughts in the realm of inanimate matter it becomes dangerous. Man must now turn his attention to himself and to the cause of his moral and intellectual disability. What is the good of increasing the comfort, the luxury, the beauty, the size and the complication of our civilization, if our weakness prevents us from guiding it to our best advantage. It is really not worthwhile to go on elaborating a way of living that is bringing about the demoralization and the disappearance of the noblest elements of the great races. It would be far better to pay more attention to ourselves than to construct faster steamers, more comfortable automobiles, cheaper radios or telescopes for examining the structure of remote nebulae. What real progress will be accomplished when aircrafts take to Europe or to China in a few hours? Is it necessary to increase production unceasingly, so that men may consume larger and larger quantities of useless things? There is not the shadow of a doubt that mechanical, physical and chemical sciences are incapable of giving us intelligence, moral discipline, health, nervous equilibrium, security and peace."<sup>22</sup>

---

22. Alexis Carrel, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

The growth of psychology in our age is greeted by man as a promising sign that we are about to approach the realization of the natural desire of man to solve the riddle of life.

But psychology has its own limitation. We can analyse and manipulate material objects without damaging them, but we cannot subject man to this kind of objective analysis. Life, even in its biological aspects, is a great mystery and a secret and it is difficult to comprehend it fully. In its human aspects life is an unfathomable secret to oneself as well as to one's fellow-men. The further we go into the depths of our being, or someone else's being, the more the goal of our full knowledge eludes our grasp. But there is an irresistible yearning in us to penetrate into the secret of man's soul, into that innermost nucleus that is "he". It is not, however, within the reach of man to study objectively and dispassionately the working of one's mind and to unveil vague desires, complex motives, semi-conscious promptings, which any analysis will falsify. Psychology claims to penetrate below the veils of the unconscious and the subconscious, but this claim is subject to a host of limitations. Briefly speaking, to know ourselves means to overcome the illusions we have about ourselves; to know our neighbour means to overcome the "parataxic distortions" (transference) about him. We all suffer in varying degrees, from illusions about ourselves. We are enmeshed in fantasies about our own personalities which we consider quite real. The soul of man, the unique core of each individual, can never be grasped and described adequately. "Psychology can therefore show us what man is not. It cannot tell us what man, each one of us, is..... The legitimate aim of psychology thus is the negative, the removal of distortions and illusions, but not the positive, the full and complete knowledge of a human being." <sup>23</sup>

---

23. Walter Leibrecht, *Religion and Culture*, New York 1959, p. 33.

There is another group of scholars which claims that where science fails intellect can eminently succeed, since in man's case the intellectual faculties are so highly developed that he is able, unlike the other animals, to infer the existence of the larger world "enclosing" his private universe and make suitable laws to regulate his individual and social life. On closer analysis, however, this claim appears to be quite hollow. No doubt, intellect helps man in translating sense data into conceptual forms, but it ultimately depends on experience and is, therefore, subjected to the same limitations to which the knowledge of physical sciences is subjected.

All reasoning is based on cause and effect. It is by means of that relation that we can arrive at the truths. But when we probe deeply into the claim of this relationship we find that knowledge gained through the relationship between cause and effect is not attained by reasoning *a priori*, but arises entirely from experience. Let an object be presented to a man of ever so strong a natural reason and abilities; if that object be entirely new to him, he will not be able to discover any of its causes or effects. "Adam, though his rational faculties be supposed at the very first entirely perfect, could not have inferred from the fluidity and transparency of water that it would suffocate him, or from the light and warmth of fire that it would consume him. No object ever discovers, by the qualities which appear to the senses, either the causes which produced it, or the effects which arise from it, nor can our reason, unassisted by experience, ever draw any inference concerning real existence and matter of fact."<sup>24</sup>

The utmost that the intellect can do is to reduce the principles, productive of natural phenomena, to a greater simplicity, and to resolve the many particular effects into a

---

24. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding*, p. 27.

few general causes by means of reasonings from analogy, experience, and observation. But as to the region where one instinctively feels and is inclined to be in spiritual accord with the Reality and find its will, the intellect has nothing positive to offer. Elasticity, gravity, cohesion of parts, communication of motion by impulse, these are perhaps the ultimate ends which reason can explore and explain; and we may consider ourselves sufficiently happy if, by accurate inquiry and reasoning, we are able to trace up the particular phenomena to, or near to, these general principles. "The most perfect philosophy of natural kind only staves off our ignorance a little longer; as perhaps the most perfect philosophy of the moral or metaphysical kind serves only to discover larger portions of it. Thus the observation of human blindness and weakness is the result of our endeavours to elude or avoid it."<sup>25</sup>

The ultimate, as we have seen, is existential. It is as inescapable as responsible human life itself. To live as human beings is to hang together, for better or worse, with the universe and the unseen Reality behind it, and to keep reacting to it continually, and to decide necessarily what in our actual choices constitutes the most important and the most real. As we avail ourselves of knowledge, in as full and objective a manner as possible, we cannot apprehend and associate directly with Reality in its wholeness. This we can do only through religion which, not only brings us into contact with Reality and reveals His message, but urges us to conform our behaviour to His Will.

"Man," observes Ibn Khaldun, "should not trust the suggestion that his mind makes, that it is able to comprehend all existing things and their causes, and to know all the details of existence. Such a suggestion of the mind should be dismissed as stupid. It should be known that every person

---

25. Ibid, p. 31.

with perception has the superficial impression that the (whole of) existence is comprised by his perceptions, and that it does not extend beyond (the realm of perceptions). The matter is different in fact. The truth lies beyond that."<sup>26</sup>

But it should not lead anyone to conclude that the intellect is almost useless and that it necessarily leads man astray. No, not the least of it. "The Intellect," in the words of Ibn Khaldun, "is a correct scale. Its indications are completely certain and in no way wrong. However, the intellect should not be used to weigh such matters as the oneness of God, the other world, the truth of prophecy, the real character of the Divine Attributes, or anything else that lies beyond the level of the intellect. That would mean to aspire for the impossible. One might compare it with a man who sees a scale in which gold is being weighed, and wants to weigh mountains in it. This (fact that it is impossible) does not prove that the indications of the scale are not true (when it is used for its proper purpose). However, there is a limit at which intellect must stop. It cannot go beyond its own level."<sup>27</sup>

What a man in the cold regions of an arid intellectualism can, at his best, infer is only the existence of a Prime Cause, but so far as His Attributes, His Will and our relation with Him are concerned, the intellect has nothing positive to say. It is at this stage that man instinctively feels the need of prophethood, and agency through which man is introduced by God to a new source of experience which provides authentic information about the Creator and His Will, the unseen real of His creation and the standard of moral and ethical valuation independent of the ephemeral changes in our environment. To phrase it differently, the guidance of prophets alone can bring us into contact with Reality and

---

26. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, translated by Franz Rosenthal, Vol. III, p. 37.

27. Ibid, p. 38.



promote in us the urge to conform our behaviour to a pattern of moral values entirely independent of the momentary constellation of our existence. Thus prophethood is not a myth, but the ultimate source of metaphysics, ethics, and morality; not the outcome of cheap credulity which any age could outgrow, but the only answer to a real, basic need of man at all times, and in all environments.

It should, however, be borne in mind that the religious experience of a prophet is quite different from what is called the mystical experience. The mystical experience defies expression and cannot, therefore, be imparted or transferred to others. "In this peculiarity mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect..... They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time."<sup>28</sup>

These experiences, however well-developed, cannot claim to be authoritative, because they are purely personal and they break down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based upon understanding and senses alone. The utmost that they can ever ask of us in this life is to admit that they establish a presumption. Analyse any one of these, and you will find that these are never unalloyed. In the words of William James, "This region contains every kind of matter, 'scrap and snake' abide these side by side. To come from thence is no infallible credential."<sup>29</sup> The great mystic Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhand, popularly known as Mujaddid Alf Thani, has discussed this point in one of his epistles. He observes:

---

28. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, London, 1903, pp. 380, 381.

29. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, London, 1903, p. 426.

One is liable to commit errors even in the knowledge gained through mystical experience. The reason is that some of the trash which the mystic considers of unusual importance is so imperceptibly mixed up with the revealed knowledge that the mystic finds it difficult to separate grain from the chaff.

"Since the errors can creep in the mystical experience, therefore, even this branch of knowledge cannot be fully depended upon..... Whatever is most reliable, final, and free from all kinds of errors is the Holy Book and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet which are based upon revelation."<sup>30</sup>

It is neither intellect nor mystical experience but revelation which can guide man to the path of righteousness. The logical or reasoning faculty, we instinctively feel, is not the organ of communion with God, nor by its greater or less acuteness and activity can a man's spiritual state be tested. "It is possible to possess ratiocinative powers of the highest order—keen and penetrative intelligence, capacities of observation, comparison, reflection, the cultured intelligence which renders a man a competent literary and historic critic, a subtile apologist, a deft framer of theological dogmas and systems of divinity; and yet with all this intellectual equipment, to lack that element of living faith, that state of the heart and affection, which constitutes the essence of true piety."<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, if we take the mystical experiences as the true basis of human guidance we place ourselves in a self-contradictory state. In order to have some intelligent insight into the nature of objects which we see in mystical visions and in order to qualify and distinguish them from morbid ecstasies and raptures, we should have some objective

---

30. Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhand, *Maktubat* (Epistles), Vol. I, Epistle No. 217.

31. John Caird, op. cit., p. 157.

standard before us. It is by this standard alone that we can confidently say of any one class of inner experiences that they are religious in distinction from another class which are purely sensuous. If there were no common criterion outside the state of exalted feeling, to which we can appeal, everyone has as much right to consider his own experience valid as any other's. But this is erroneous. Purely mystical experiences which do not have the sanction of the prophets are mostly subjective and are primarily determined as much by individual character and temperament as by nature of the object which a mystic sees in a state of trance. "And in a religion as elsewhere can we extract from a thing so variable and capricious as feeling a criterion of objective worth? If intensity of emotion proves Reality, or if religions are to be graduated according to the liveliness of the feelings excited in the breast of the worshipper, the purest unalloyed spiritual faith, will have no advantage, not only over the more corrupt forms of the same religion down to the grossest nature-worship or fetishism. 'My religion must be true, for I feel them to be true: Of this or that doctrine I am convinced, because it touches and thrills my heart: The irrefragable reality of my idea of God is certified to me by this, that it penetrates with strange emotion the inmost depths of my being, fills my spirit with unspeakable wonder and joy or rapture and elation.' This is a kind of argument which the adherents of all religions alike can employ, and the more sensuous and materialistic religions with even greater force than the more rational and spiritual."<sup>32</sup>

There is also another aspect of this theory. If we believe that religion is merely a nexus between the human spirit and the Divine, and if, therefore, we are in search of it on the human or subjective side which most fully corresponds to the infinite object, then the least of all that we can find is that

---

32. John Caird, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-64.

which meets this requirement in mere feeling. "For that side of my nature, the characteristic of which is to be individual, variable, accidental, cannot be that which corresponds to, or is capable of entering into relation with an object the very idea of which is to be universal, immutable, necessary."<sup>33</sup> On this ground also, it is impossible to claim for feeling the character of the exclusively or distinctively religious faculty.

The foregoing considerations lead obviously to the conclusion that what a man really needs for his guidance is neither pure intellect nor pure feeling, but a mystical feeling based on objective truth, say, objective mysticism. Let us call this code of human guidance as religion. But all religions, however; do not come up to this standard. It should be a religion that not only touches the chords of the heart, but is also capable of elevating it from the region of subjective caprice and waywardness and that it can eminently distinguish between the true and the false in religion, between the lowest and the most corrupt, and the highest and the purest by an objective standard. That which enters the heart must first be discerned by intelligence to be true. It must be seen as having in its own nature a right to dominate inner experiences and as constituting the principle by which this type of experience must be judged and regulated.

This kind of objective mysticism or intuitional intellect, which is necessary to regulate the life of a man on proper lines, one can get from the prophets alone whose consciousness belongs exclusively neither to the domain of inner experience nor to that of pure intellect. It has its own peculiar nature and social consciousness. On the one hand, it touches the springs of thought and awakens in us conceptions far transcending their own immediate content and significance. On the other hand, it makes such

---

33. John Caird, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

subjective experiences of objective worth by arousing the mind of man to the presence of definite and accurate notions concerning God and divine things and determining man's relation with them, and further giving him a definite scheme of individual and social behaviour to be adopted as a result of that relationship so that there should be complete harmony within man and between man and man.

Ibn Taymiyyah has admirably discussed this point in his book *al-Nubuwwat*. He believes that the consciousness of a prophet is developed only with the help of the Wisdom and Will which emanate from God Himself and must in no sense depend either on the natural operation of the human mind or on that of the human heart. He categorically rejects the view presented by some of the Muslim philosophers, especially al-Farabi, that revelation is an Active Intelligence. He does not agree even with those who look upon prophethood as the gift of a deep mystical experience. Ibn Taymiyyah defines prophet (*nabi*) as a man to whom God sends messages."<sup>34</sup> The learned writer breaks through the formalism of *Kalam* and grapples with the basic issues between the intellectualistic ethics of the philosophers and the mystical ecstasies of the mystics. The prophet, of necessity, occupies the higher and the wider,—wide enough to comprehend the whole life,—immeasurably valuable point of view, because it is through him that such realities are revealed to us which we cannot get at with the help of our own faculties, whether mental or emotional. His revelations are most perfect and consistent because prophetic consciousness is not derivative, made up of a multitude of inherited tendencies, each of which may deflect or distort the intellectual or the mystic. Prophethood is a special gift of God by which a man is commissioned to deliver to mankind the will and the commands of the Creator.

---

34. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Nubuwwat*, p. 17.

And it was not (vouchsafed) to any mortal that Allah should speak to him unless (it be) by revelation or from behind a veil or (that) He sendeth a messenger to reveal what He will by His Leave. Lo! He is Exalted, Wise.<sup>35</sup>

A prophet shares with other human beings their humanly qualities, but he has special distinction (of prophethood) which makes him stand far above the common race of mankind.

Say! I am only a mortal like you. My Lord inspireth in me that your God is only One God.<sup>36</sup>

Thus the argument that since prophetic experience is not accessible to all, its validity is, therefore, questionable, is quite fallacious.

Organisms diminish in number, as their place in the scale ascends. The more delicate the insight, the rarer the endowment; the wider its range, the smaller the number of those who are gifted with it. It is, therefore, quite logical that, while the reports of every faculty must submit to the severest tests of verification, the evidence of one faculty is to be set aside merely because it is possessed by a few alone. Within the range of familiar experience, those who possess a delicate musical ear, or who have a fine discernment of the harmonies of colour, are not silenced because the masses of the people, the "hewers of wood and drawers of water," affirm that they have no such sense. Is then the report of the finer senses invalid even for those of rougher mould, because they happen to be without it?<sup>37</sup> It may surely be said that those members of the human race who have been favoured with the highest conceivable endowment—the gift of prophetic

---

35. Al-Qur'an, xxv. 51.

36. Ibid., xviii, 110.

37. William Knight, *Aspects of Theism*, London, 1983, p. 111.

consciousness ought to be entirely trusted and even referred to by the rest. Here, if anywhere, authority may come in, and the reports of those who are specialists be referred to, until they are proved to be erroneous.

Happily we are in possession of tests which do not differ from those applicable to other forms of knowledge by means of which we can discover the truth of religious experience. These are intellectual and pragmatic tests and we can confidently assess the true value of the message delivered by the apostles of God. The difference between the judgments of revelation and those of the mind and the heart is quite apparent. The prophets not only provide right bases of relationship between God and man, between man and man, and between man and his physical environment, but along with them they bring into prominence the region which is generally enveloped by the mist of vague speculation. Thus they supply suitable and satisfactory answers to the metaphysical yearnings of man.

The philosopher and the mystic also make such claims. But the Great Reality of the logical understanding whose existence is supposed to be attested by the necessary laws of mind is not an objective Being but the mere projected shadow of self. Similarly, the ontologist and the teleologist unconsciously draw their own portrait, and by an effort of thought, project it outward on the canvas of Infinity.

Similar is the case with the mystic. No doubt, he discerns for a moment the presence of an August Being, other than human, through a break in the clouds which usually veil our eyes, but the truths which a mystic gathers in this happy moment cannot be restated in the language of common speech and always evade the categories of logic and refuse to be compressed within the frames of knowledge.

The case of prophetic revelation is, however, quite different. The knowledge of the fact which the prophet

reveals through intuition, though presumptive at first sight, is fully capable of scrutiny. It can admirably stand the test of intellect and exercises a dynamic influence on the life and thought of the people, who uphold it. Dr. Iqbal has elucidated this point in his book, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*:

The mystic does not wish to return from the repose, of 'unitary experience' and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large. The prophet's return is creative. He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history, and thereby to create a fresh world of ideals. For the mystic the repose of unitary experience is something final; for the prophet it is the awakening, within him, of world-shaking psychological forces, calculated to completely transform the human world. The desire to see his religious experience transformed into a living world—force is supreme in the prophet. Thus his return amounts to a kind of pragmatic test of the value of his religious experience. In its creative act the prophet's will judges both itself and the world of concrete fact in which it endeavours to objectify itself. In penetrating the impervious material before him the prophet discovers himself for himself, and unveils himself to the eye of history. Another way of judging the value of a prophet's religious experience, therefore, would be to examine the type of manhood that he has created and the cultural world that has sprung out of the spirit of his message<sup>38</sup>

It thus becomes clear that the prophetic experience is not the denial of the impulse of life, but an uncontrollable will to

---

38 Iqbal, op. cit., pp. 124-25.



give a constant impulse to the assertion, strengthening and enhancement of the feeling of life, a being overmastered by values and tasks, a passionate endeavour to realise these aims and ideals. Mysticism is a passive, quietist, resigned contemplation. Philosophy is abstract idealism or rational persuasiveness or, in other words, a rational consistency beyond concrete exemplification. The regulating, all-embracing pattern of prophetic experience is always the concrete event, the actualisation of the ultimate. This experience is active, challenging, desiring, and ethical. The prophet moves into the world with a strong will to live and reform the world. He has an unshakable confidence in his mission; a faith firm as a rock, a spirit bold and adventurous, and a strong determination to fight the evil forces. The mystic life is a life of withdrawal and "inwardness" to deep peace, blissful quietism, and the yearning to tear one's soul forcibly from all the ensnaring chains of the outer world. The prophet's life is full of activity and enthusiasm. Instead of renouncing the struggle of life, the prophet endeavours to establish confidence in life, in a creative act, in a free moral deed, "in hope believing against all hope, rousing himself against despair."

Faith is thus the basic experience of prophetic piety, of course not in the intellectualist sense of mere assent to truth, but in the sense of a fundamental feeling of confidence in life. Moreover, the devotional life of the mystic comes to a climax in extraordinary experiences which happen in a state of super-normal consciousness: ecstasies, besides visions and auditions of an ecstatic character, in which excitations of the senses are bound up with purely spiritual experiences. In prophetic experience, decisive events, such as the prophetic call and revelation, are accompanied by visions, but there is a good deal of difference between the two. For a mystic the raptures of vision are the ultimate goals, but with a prophet it is the message that he receives in revelation that is of primary

importance.

The mystical experience..... is always bound up with a tendency to reflective thought; among some, to metaphysical speculation; ..... among others, to careful psychological self-analysis..... The experience of prophetic personalities, on the contrary, is perfectly simple and unreflective, lifted above speculative thought, and free from all psychologizing. Here is a just as little subtle meditation on the nature of God as meticulous self-analysis and self-exploration; here is only faith, hope and love.<sup>39</sup>

Then there is also a good deal of difference between the mystical and the prophetic concept of the Deity. Mystical ecstasy is a hidden, incomprehensible mystery; it cannot, therefore, be grasped in thought and described in words, since it is beyond conscious experience. "The divine likewise is exalted above all speech, unnameable and inexpressible, the 'Abyss' the 'silence', as the Gnostics say."<sup>40</sup> The prophet gives a very clear concept of God which every man can easily grasp. There is nothing hazy about it as in prophetic experience the idea of the Absolute is not a speculative interpretation or a metaphysical projection. As for the experience of ecstasy, it is the outcome of objective knowledge communicated to the apostle from Lord. God, in prophetic religion, is not a silent spectator of the drama of life, but He is the Creator and Worker, the Speaker who manifests His Will in nature, as in the course of individual and collective destiny.

As the mystic experiences are purely personal, they possess no binding authority for all men. This is the reason why, ultimately, mysticism is exalted above all religious authority. The prophetic revelation is an objective, historical

---

39. Friedrich Heiler, *Prayer*, Oxford University Press, London, 1937, p. 145.

40. Friedrich Heiler, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

fact, a universally binding communication of the divine will. The idea of authority is thus rooted in prophetic religion as revelation. "God communicates His Will in the creative experiences of the prophets; he speaks through their mouths; their word is, therefore, binding upon contemporaries and upon the posterity."<sup>41</sup> The mystics, no doubt, enjoy great respect among their disciples, but it pales into insignificance when compared with the position and authority which Moses, Christ, and Muhammad eminently possessed. The Qur'an enunciates this point in these words:

Each and every Messenger who was sent by Us was sent for the sole purpose that he should be obeyed under the sanction of Allah."<sup>42</sup>

The mystic is concerned only with God and soul. He has an intense longing to be unified with God and it is as though there was nothing else than God and soul itself. The prophet also stands in the presence of God as an individual, but is never isolated either from other men or the universe. He comes to lead the human race to the path of Allah, "as the distress which vexes him is not his own only; it is that of his brethren as well; the redemption for which he longs is also the redemption of his people, his fellow believers, nay, the entire humanity."<sup>43</sup> Hence the self-consciousness of the prophet has an active and social quality which is lacking in that of the mystic. Moreover, the great prophetic leaders know themselves to be chosen by God, not however, to the ecstatic enjoyment of Him and to the bliss of divine love, alone, but to concrete positive duties as well. The Holy Qur'an says:

He it is Who sendeth down clear revelations unto His

---

41. Ibid., p. 154.

42. iv., 64.

43. Friedrich Heiler, op. cit., p. 161.

bondman, that he may bring you forth from darkness into light; and Lo! for you, Allah is Full of Pity, Merciful.<sup>44</sup>

The prophet, like the mystic, does not journey to God aside from the broad highway on a solitary path of his own; but he is to bring forth his fellow-men from darkness to light. The prophetic personality, therefore, reacts against the traditional faith and becomes the centre of new associations, whether smaller or larger than the existing ones.

The Holy Qur'an has described the role of the prophets at so many places. We reproduce below some of the verses in order to give the reader an idea as to the true nature and significance of their mission:

And We made them Chiefs who guide by Our Command and We inspired in them the doing of good deeds and the right establishment of worship and the giving of alms and they were worshippers of Us (alone).<sup>45</sup>

The prophets are, thus, the devoted teachers of the "sacred school of the knowledge of God and of the spiritual life of all mankind".

We verily sent Our messengers with clear proofs and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance, that mankind may observe right measure.<sup>46</sup>

The multifarious responsibilities with which the prophets have been saddled will converge on two points i.e., the teaching of scripture and maintaining poise in thought and deeds of humanity.

The prophets have been assigned the task of explaining, with the help of words and deeds, the revelations from God:

With clear proofs and writings; and We have

---

44. lvii. 9. 45. xxi. 173. 46. lvii, 25.

revealed unto thee the Remembrance that thou mayst explain to mankind that which hath been revealed for them, and that happy they may reflect.<sup>47</sup>

It thus becomes clear that the prophet is required, not only to elucidate the implications of the Message received from God, but has to implement it in the world of reality. The word "tabyin" (exposition, explication) is highly significant and covers a much wider field than a mere explanation as we find in another verse of the Holy Qur'an:

We have revealed the Scripture unto thee only that thou mayst explain unto them that wherein they differ, and (as) a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe.<sup>48</sup>

This verse clearly mentions the prophet as the final authority to deliver verdict on actions of the people. He alone is competent to decide what is right and what is wrong. He is also a guide in all spheres of life, and is a mercy for the believers.

It is obvious, therefore, that the function of the prophet is not only to convey the message of God, but to translate it in terms of practical reality. It, therefore, becomes the bounden duty of all those who accept Allah as their Sovereign to follow His commands in all spheres of life that is, in law and ethics, in economics and politics, in dogma and ritual:

Each and every messenger who was sent by us was sent for the sole purpose that he *should be* obeyed under the sanction of God.<sup>49</sup>

The expression "should be obeyed under the sanction of god" clearly signifies the fact that a prophet is not to be obeyed for his own sake, but because it is through him that God reveals to us His Will which is the fountainhead of all

---

47. xvi. 44. 48. xvi. 64. 49. iv. 64.

laws, and, secondly, as the bearer of the Revelation, he is best fitted and, for that reason, authorised by the Almighty to interpret the Revelation and to show us how it is to be applied to practical life.

Allah commands the Prophet to tell his followers:

Say (O Muhammad!), if you love God, follow me—and God will love you and forgive you your sins, for God is Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy.<sup>50</sup>

Whatever the Apostle commands you, accept and whatever he forbids you, avoid.<sup>51</sup>

Obedience to the prophets is thus the real test of one's submission to God. A man is the true worshipper of God only when he develops an attitude of life in which every moral valuation, every decision as to the practical course he would like in life to take, is the outcome of a voluntary, wholehearted submission to the guidance received through the prophet—the Prophet whom God thus addresses:

Nay, by the Sustainer: they do not attain the faith unless they make thee judge of what is in dispute among them, and find in themselves no dislike of what thou decidest and submit with full submission.<sup>52</sup>

The great Muslim thinker, Ibn Taymiyyah, has enumerated the functions of a prophet in his book *Al-Nubuwwat*. He contends that the prophet does not exhort people only to develop a philosophic contemplation of God or a mystic type of love for Him, for each of these leads to the doctrine of the unity of Being, of the identity of the world and God, and so to the absolute inanity both of God and man, for God is not something to be merely perceived or admired and cherished; He must be recognised as one to Whom we must submit our will. This recognition alone is describable as

---

50. iii. 31. 51. lix. 7. 52. iv. 65.

*Tawhid* (Monotheism). The Holy Qur'an has succinctly summed up the characteristics of the mission of the prophets in the following verses:

That is our argument. We gave it unto Abraham against his folk. We raise unto degrees of wisdom whom We will. Lo! thy Lord is Wise, Aware. And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob each of them We guided; and Noah did We guide aforetime and his seed (We guided) David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward the good.

And Zachariah and John and Jesus and Elias. Each one (of them) was of the righteous. And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. Each one of them did We prefer above (Our) creatures, with some of their forefathers and their off-spring and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them unto a Straight Path, such is the guidance of Allah wherewith He guideth whom He will of his bond men. But if they had set up (for worship) aught beside Him (all) that they did would have been vain.

Those are they unto whom we gave the Scripture and Command and prophethood. But if these disbelieve therein, then indeed We shall entrust it to a people who will not be disbelievers therein. Those are they whom Allah guideth, so follow their guidance. Say (O Muhammad, unto mankind): I ask of you no reward for it. Lo! it is naught but a Reminder to (His) creatures.<sup>53</sup>

In the above verses the distinctive marks of the prophets have been mentioned. If we reflect over them, the following points become strikingly clear:

---

53. vi. 84-91.

- (a) It has been said that "this is Our argument. We gave it unto Abraham against his folk." This shows that the source of prophetic knowledge is God Himself.
- (b) "We guided them unto a straight path" and "Each one (of them) was of the righteous," amply bear testimony to the fact that they were all perfectly innocent.
- (c) "Each one of them did We prefer above (Our) creatures," clearly indicates that prophethood is a special favour from the Lord and it cannot be achieved by one's own effort.
- (d) "We gave the Scripture and Command and prophethood," recounts the special gifts which they receive from their Lord.
- (e) "So follow their guidance". signifies their function in life. It is through their guidance alone that one can find the path of real success.
- (f) "I ask of you no reward for it" reveals the motive behind their activities. It shows that they have no personal ends to gain. It is only for the pleasure of God that they bear all kinds of hardships in life.
- (g) The Holy Qur'an has also pointed out the fact that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zachariah, John, Jesus, Elias, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah, and Lot, and so many others like them are the shining stars of one Galaxy. They are all prophets from God and as such have only one message to deliver.



## THE PROPHETHOOD OF MUHAMMAD

(peace be upon him)

We have seen that since the fountainhead of the knowledge of all prophets was the same, all the prophets delivered in essence the same message to humanity. There is no variation, whatsoever, in the fundamentals. The variation now witnessed is the result of the adulteration of that message. The Holy Qur'an asserts that all the prophets belong to the same sacred school of Divine knowledge and of the spiritual life for all mankind:

O ye messengers! eat of good things, and do right.  
Lo! I am Aware of what ye do. And lo! this your religion is one religion and I am your Lord; so keep your duty unto Me!

He hath ordained for you that religion which He commanded unto Noah, and that which We inspire in thee (Muhammad) and that which We commanded unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying: Establish the religion, and be not divided.<sup>2</sup>

The Qur'an further states that the prophets had been, by their very nature, the ardent followers of one single religion, i.e., the worship of the One God alone. It was the arrogance and pride of the evil-doers that led the simple-minded people astray and divided them into mutually conflicting groups:

Mankind were one community, and Allah sent (unto them) prophets as bearers of good tidings and

---

1. xxiii. 51-52. 2. xlii. 13.

as warners, and revealed therewith the Scripture with the truth that it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed. And only those unto whom (the Scripture) was given differed concerning it, after clear proofs had come unto them, through hatred against one another. And Allah by His Will guided those who believe unto the truth of that concerning which they differed.<sup>3</sup>

We have made a religious law and an open road for every one of you.<sup>4</sup>

Shah Waliullah of Delhi has brilliantly elucidated this point. Says he: "All the prophets preached one *Din* (way of life) and if there was difference among them it was in the practical details of the legal structures which they introduced amongst their followers. But so far as the basic teachings of their respective religions are concerned, i.e., the worship of one Allah, there is complete agreement amongst them."<sup>5</sup>

The Holy Prophet has, in his own eloquent style, expressed this truth in the following words:

The prophets are brothers by relationship, and their mothers are different, but their religion is one.<sup>6</sup>

If we look into the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, two points are strikingly clear:

First, there is no race, nation, or a group of people in which a prophet was not raised:

And for every nation there is a Messenger.<sup>7</sup>

And verily We have raised in every nation a Messenger.<sup>8</sup>

---

3. ii. 213. 4. v. 48.

5. *Hujjatullah al-Balighah*, Cairo, Vol. I, p. 84.

6. Bukhari, *Kitab al-Anbiya*, Chap. Christ.

7. x. 48. 8. xvi. 36.

Verily, We sent before thee (Muhammad) Messengers to their own folk. They brought clear proofs (of Allah's Sovereignty).<sup>9</sup>

There are countless verses in the Holy Qur'an which can be quoted in support of the contention that God Almighty has sent His "Light" amongst all peoples in order to guide them to the path of righteousness. No nation has been deprived of this great privilege. This fact is so pervasive and important that the believers of Allah have been asked to acknowledge this as an article of faith:

Lo! those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and seek to make distinction between Allah and His Messengers, and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others, and seek to choose a way in between, such are disbelievers in truth; and for disbelievers We prepare a shameful doom. But those who believe in Allah and His Messengers and make no distinction between any of them, unto them Allah will give their reward; and Allah was ever Forgiving, Merciful.<sup>10</sup>

Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His Scriptures and His Messengers—We make no distinction between any of His Messengers—and they say: we hear and we obey.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, the believers have been enjoined not only to believe in the prophethood of all the prophets but also in the Books which were revealed unto them:

Say (O Muslims!): we believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the prophets received from their Lord. We

---

9. xiii. 7. 10. iv. 150-52. 11. ii. 285.

make no distinction between any of them, unto Him we have surrendered.<sup>12</sup>

Say (O Muhammad!): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which is revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed unto Moses and Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord.<sup>13</sup>

O Ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His messenger and the Scripture which He hath revealed unto His messenger, and the Scriptures which He revealed aforetime. Whoso disbelieveth in Allah and His angels and His Scriptures and His messengers and the Last Day, he verily hath wandered far astray.<sup>14</sup>

Then in Surah "The Believer" those people who disbelieve in the revealed books have been threatened with severe punishment in the after-life.

Those who deny the Scripture and that wherewith We send our messengers, but they will come to know, When shackles are about their necks and chains. They are dragged through boiling waters; then they are thrust unto the fire.<sup>15</sup>

The idea underlying these two articles of faith, viz., belief in all the prophets and belief in all the revealed books, is to make man realise that all mankind was at first one community, that subsequently it stood divided, and that it should, therefore, be man's endeavour to restore unity among his kind.

The wide differences that we find in the message of the prophets and which have been unfortunately sharpened into bitter hostilities are our own mental concoctions. God Almighty, Who raised the prophets amongst mankind at

---

12. ii. 136.    13. iii. 84.    14. iv. 136.    15. xl. 70-72.

different periods of human history, entrusted them with one single message to preach to the people. If the fountainhead of Divine knowledge be diverse, religions must be numerous. If the source of prophetic revelation is recognised as one—and such recognition is inevitable—there is no other alternative but to believe in one and the same religion for the same species of being, i.e. mankind.

The human race has not altered physically and mentally during all these tens of thousands of years. The passions and pleasures and heartaches and the political and domestic problems of the people of all ages have, in all likelihood, remained the same throughout the entire course of history. When mankind has all along retained the same basic qualities and characteristics, it is quite natural that the Creator should have sent down the same guidance for the entire human race. Should not the same rules of conduct guide them in the spiritual world? Why should not mankind be guided by the same spiritual light?

Let us see the nature and content of the religion which was preached by each and every Messenger of God.

The basic concept which Islam seeks to inculcate is the concept of the Unity of God—a concept on which stands the whole edifice of the revealed religions. It is from this concept that all other tenets, principles, and injunctions flow as from a life-force.

There is none worthy of worship except God, is the principle on which such strong stress is laid that the entire Qur'an seems to be just an exposition of its implications and a commentary on it. Every prophet, therefore, tried to impress this upon the minds of the people:

And We verily sent Noah unto his fold, and he said: O my people! serve Allah. You have no other God save Him. Will ye not ward off evil?<sup>16</sup>

---

16. xxiii 23.

Lo! We sent Noah unto his people (saying) warn people are the painful doom come unto them. He said: O my people: I am a plain warner unto you (bidding you) serve Allah and keep your duty unto Him and obey me.<sup>17</sup>

After Noah, another prophet, Hud called upon the people to accept the sovereignty of Allah:

And unto (the tribe of) Ad (we sent) their brother, Hud. He said O my people! serve Allah. You have no other God save Him. Will ye not ward off (evil)?<sup>18</sup>

And unto (the tribe of) Ad (We sent) their brother, Hud. He said: O my people! serve Allah. You have no other God save Him. Lo! you do not invent!<sup>19</sup>

Then Salih, another well-known prophet, appeared on the stage of history and gave the same message to his people as had been delivered by his eminent predecessors:

And unto (the tribe of) Thamud (We sent) their brother Salih. He said: O my people! serve Allah. You have no other God save Him.<sup>20</sup>

And unto (the tribe of) Thamud (We sent) their brother Salih. He said: O my people! serve Allah. Ye have no other God save Him. He brought you forth from the earth and hath made you husband of it. So ask forgiveness of Him and turn unto Him repentant. Lo! my Lord is nigh, Responsive.<sup>21</sup>

The discussion of Abraham with his father and other men of his tribe embodies the same truth:

When he (Abraham) said unto his father: O my father! why worshippingst thou that which heareth not nor seeth nor can it aught avail thee.

O my father! lo! there hath come unto me of

---

17. lxxi. 1-3. 18. vii. 65. 19. xi. 50. 20. vii. 73. 21. xi. 61.

knowledge that which came not unto thee. So follow me, and I will lead thee on the right path.

O my father! serve not the devil. Lo! the devil is a rebel unto the Beneficent.<sup>22</sup>

When he (Abraham) said unto his father and his fold: What are these images unto which ye pay devotion? They said: We found our fathers worshippers of them.

He said: Verily ye and your fathers were in plain error.

They said: Bringest thou unto us the truth or art thou cracking jokes with us?

He said: Nay, but your Lord is the Lord of the Heavens and the earth, Who created them: and I man of those who testify unto that.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, the Prophet Lot asked his people to obey God in right earnest, but his people did not pay any heed to his fervent appeal:

The folk of Lot denied the messengers (of Allah) when their brother Lot said unto: Will ye not ward off (evil). Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you, so keep your duty to Allah and obey me.<sup>24</sup>

Joseph was imprisoned for no fault of his. It was the high-handedness on the part of a proud monarch and his vain queen that he was thrown behind the prison-bars. During his imprisonment when he got an opportunity to preach to his fellow-prisoners, he tried to impress upon them the same basic truth. How passionate is the appeal that he makes:

O my two fellow-prisoners! are diverse Lords better, or Allah the One, the Almighty? Those whom

---

22. xix. 42-44. 23. xxi. 52-56. 24. xxvi. 160-63.

ye worship beside Him are but names which you have named, ye and your fathers. Allah hath revealed no sanction for them. The decision rests with Allah only Who hath commanded you that ye worship none save Him. This is right religion, but most men know not.<sup>25</sup>

Shu'ayb, another, prophet, who was sent to the people of Midian, said to his folk:

O my people! serve Allah. Ye have no other God save Him.<sup>26</sup>

Will ye not ward off (evil)? Lo! I am a faithful messenger unto you, so keep your duty to Allah and obey me.<sup>27</sup>

After Shu'ayb, the Prophet Moses came to the world and told the people in explicit terms that Allah alone is the Sustainer and Nourisher of everything that exists in the universe and He alone should, therefore, be worshipped.

[When Pharaoh asked him]: Who then is the Lord of you twain [Moses and Aaron], O Moses?

He (Moses) replied: Our Lord is He who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright.<sup>28</sup>

Pharaoh said: And who is the Lord of the worlds?

Moses said: Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if ye had but sure belief.<sup>29</sup>

Jesus preached the same truth to his people as had been preached by his predecessors. He declared in unequivocal words:

I come unto you with a sign from your Lord, so keep your duty to Allah and obey me. Lo! Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is a straight path.<sup>30</sup>

---

25. xii. 40. 26. vii. 85. 27. xxvi. 177-79. 28. ii. 49-50. 29. xxvi. 23-24.  
30. iii 50-51.



When Jesus came with clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty), he said: I have come unto you with wisdom, and to make plain some of that concerning which ye differ. So keep your duty to Allah, and obey me. Lo! Allah, He is my Lord, and your Lord. So worship Him. This is the right path. But the factions among them differed. Then woe unto those who do wrong from the doom of a painful day.<sup>31</sup>

The last of the prophets Muhammad (may peace of Allah be upon him) appeared in the world and said, in effect, "I am only a mortal. But He who has created the universe has bidden me to bear His message to you in order that you might live in harmony with the plan of His creation. He has commanded me to remind you of the message preached by all brother prophets who preceded me that Allah alone is the Creator, Sustainer, and Nourisher of the whole universe. He alone is, therefore, entitled to command obedience higher than that of every other authority. It cannot be that God created the universe only to find His Authority over it usurped by others. It would be sheer ingratitude to obey aught other than Him, when everything that exists owes its existence to Him alone."

Say: Shall I choose for a protecting friend other than Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, Who feedeth, and is never fed. Say: I am ordered to be the first to surrender (unto Him).<sup>32</sup>

Such an attitude of 'choosing for a protecting friend other than Allah, runs counter to the spirit of true religion. The Holy Qur'an stresses the fact that all *de jure* sovereignty belongs to Him whose *de facto* sovereignty encompasses the entire universe and who exclusively enjoys the sovereign prerogative over all creation. To believe in God is, therefore, to believe in His sovereignty, for how is He related to us

---

31. xliii, 63-65. 32. vii. 17.

except as a Sovereign to whom all obedience is due and as the Supreme Authority having title to allegiance superior to that which we owe to human authorities. That is the reason why the Qur'an lays so much stress on the sovereignty of Allah:

The authority rests with none but Allah. He commands you not to surrender to anyone save Him. This is the right path.<sup>33</sup>

Unto Allah belongeth the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is therein, and He is able to do all things.<sup>34</sup>

As sovereign, God alone is to be obeyed, to Him alone is submission due.

And your God is one God, therefore surrender unto Him.<sup>35</sup>

Beware: the creation is His and the Command is (also) His.<sup>36</sup>

The sovereignty of God is, therefore, absolute, irrespective of whether we acknowledge it and submit to it or not. What the prophets emphasised is that the Almighty God, Whose Sovereignty we are forced to accept in physical life, is also the Sovereign in our moral and political life. Unless we recognise this fact and conform our behaviour to the Will of God, we cannot achieve true success. This is what every prophet laid stress upon and this was fully clarified and implemented by the last of the prophets.

Allah commanded Muhammad (peace be upon him!) to declare in unequivocal terms:

Say: I am no new thing among the messengers (of Allah) nor know I what will be done with me or with you. I do but follow that which is inspired in me, and I

---

33. xii. 40. 34. v. 120. 35. xxii. 34. 36. vii. 54.

am but a plain warner.<sup>37</sup>

This verse also winnows out one of the mistaken notions commonly held by the non-Muslims about Islam. They have been labouring under a grave misconception that Islam was founded by Muhammad (peace be upon him!) and, therefore, call this religion "Mohammadanism" after his name. Nothing is farther from the truth. Islam is a Divine Code for human life, given to humanity by God through His prophets who conveyed its message to the people and exemplified its teachings by living according to its ideals. Allah Himself has chosen its name as *al-Islam*:

Lo! Religion with Allah (is) *al-Islam* (surrender to His Will and Guidance).<sup>38</sup>

Then in chapter xii. of the Qur'an entitled "Pilgrimage" it has been clearly stated that all the prophets were the standard-bearers of this very religion and that God has Himself conferred upon those who profess this Faith the honourable title of 'Muslims':

And strive for Allah with the endeavour which is His right. He hath chosen you and hath not laid upon you in religion any hardship; the faith of your father Abraham (is yours). He hath named you Muslims of old time and in this (Scripture), that the messenger may be a witness against you, and that ye may be witnesses against mankind. So establish worship, pay the poor-due and hold fast to Allah. He is your protecting friend, a blessed Patron and a blessed Helper.<sup>39</sup>

At this stage one might ask: If all the messengers of God have only one message to convey to humanity, then why so much stress on following the teachings of Muhammad? If the last of the prophets has nothing new to say, why not follow

---

37. xlv. 9. 38. iii. 19. 39. xxii. 78.

Christ or Moses and thus find salvation?

It is evident that all the prophets were divinely inspired and had the same message for mankind with such variations and differences as the social conditions of the time required. They all worked towards the same end, persuading people to believe in One God and render obedience and worship to none but Him, but it is through the last of the prophets that the message of God was revealed to mankind in all its perfection. The Qur'an says:

To-day have I made perfect for you your religion and fulfilled My favour on you, and chosen Islam as your religion.<sup>40</sup>

The verse signifies that the Qur'an fully embodies the teachings of all the prophets who had been sent from time to time, to reveal the Will of the Lord to mankind and, along with this, it also contains all those principles which the human beings require or will require for their guidance at any stage of human existence. In the same way as the Holy Qur'an, being the last of the revealed Books, is perfect in every manner, so is the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him!) the last of the prophets, who was raised for the guidance of the entire human race till the end of time:

Muhammad (peace be upon him!) is not the father of any of your men, but he is the apostle of God and the last of the prophets.<sup>41</sup>

And We have not sent thee but as a bringer of good tidings and as a warner unto all mankind, but most of mankind know not.<sup>42</sup>

And We have not sent thee save as a mercy to the world.<sup>43</sup>

Say: (O Muhammad!), O Mankind! lo, I am the

---

40. v. 3. 41. xxxiii. 49. 42. xxxiv. 28. 43. xxi. 107.

messenger of Allah to you all, (the messenger of) Him unto Whom belongeth the sovereignty of the heaven and the earth.<sup>44</sup>

These verses eloquently speak of the fact that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the universal messenger and it is in his teachings along that one can find an integrated image of Islam in its finalised form.

During the twenty-three years of this ministry, Muhammad (peace be upon him!) not only propagated the message of the Lord with great zeal but arrested it in space-time forces in such a perfect manner as to make it a living ideal for all time to come. With his words and deeds, Muhammad (peace be upon him!) showed people the way to attain individual and social righteousness. Nothing that pertains to life, be it spiritual or "mundane," falls outside the orbit of the Prophet's teachings.

All the earlier prophets who came to this world did really teach and exemplify the message of God, but when we study their achievements we find that they emphasised only some specific aspect of that message. In the life of Noah, for instance, we find a model for persistent propagation of his faith with all the fervour of a true believer. In Abraham we find a wonderful exponent of the Unity of God; he did not waver even when thrown into fire. The life of Moses presents a picture of successful struggle carried on perseveringly against the forces of evil and tyranny. Jacob's life is a wonderful specimen of patience and self-abnegation while the life of Jesus depicts the life of submission and resignation to the Will of God and his deep love for Him.

Muhammad's life is an embodiment of all the attributes, virtues, and qualities found individually in all the prophets. In him the religious zeal of a believer, love for God and

---

44. vii. 158.

humanity, steadfastness, and perseverance in the path of righteousness, dauntless courage in the face of hostility, resignation and submission to the Will of the Creator together with the qualities of a statesman and social reformer, have been so beautifully blended that his personality appears to be an ideal one in all respects, with all the virtues and qualities harmoniously conceived to complement and support each other: nothing superfluous and nothing lacking—a balance and composure which gives one the feeling of a perfect model for humanity.

There is nothing hazy about the Prophet; each phase of his pious life is as clear as day-light. His birth, his childhood, his commercial dealings, his family life, his deep faith in God, his treatment of friends and foes, his statesmanship, his fervour to preach the faith, his calmness and self-possession both in the face of defeat and at the time of victory, his illness and death—in short the minutest details of his life have been authentically recorded. If one happens to read a single book on the biography of Muhammad (peace be upon him!) one is struck by the painstaking labour that has been undertaken in collecting facts about his sacred life and in sifting and arranging them. The whole science of *Asma al-Rijal* (the science of scrutinising the lives of narrators of traditions of the Prophet) bears ample testimony to the acute care shown in recording<sup>45</sup> his words and deeds.

---

45. In order to undermine the authenticity of traditions which are the most important sources of Muhammad's life, it is alleged by some of the critics that the traditions were recorded long after the death of the Holy Prophet. But this view is absolutely erroneous. Dr. A. Sprenger, who rightly claims to have been the first to have submitted the sources of the life of Muhammad to a critical inquiry, says: 'It is generally believed that the traditions were preserved during the first century of the Hijra solely by memory. European scholars under the erroneous impression that *haddathana* (we have been informed by) is the term by which the traditions are usually introduced are of opinion that none of the traditions contained in the collection of *al-Bukhari* had been written down before him.' "This," he continues, "appears to be an error. Ibn Amr and other companions of Muhammad committed his sayings to writing and their example was followed by many of the Tabā'un" (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, Vol. XXV, p. 303, quoted by Dr. Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, in *Hadith Literature*, p. 43.

Muhammad Asad in his book *Islam at the Crossroads* writes:

For our purpose it may suffice to say that a complete science has been evolved, the only object of which is the research as to the meaning, the form and the way of transmission of the Prophet's *ahadith*. An historical branch of this science succeeded in establishing an unbroken chain of detailed biographies of all those personalities who have ever been mentioned as narrators of Traditions. The lives of those men and women have been thoroughly investigated from every point of view, and only those of them have been accepted as reliable whose way of life and of transmitting a *hadith* perfectly responds to the standard stipulated by the *muhaddithun* and believed to be the most exacting than could be conceived.<sup>46</sup>

He adds:

In spite of all the efforts which have been employed to challenge the authenticity of *hadith* as a body, those modern critics, both Eastern and Western, have not been able to back their purely temperamental criticism with results of scientific research. It would be rather difficult to do so, as the compilers of the early *hadith* collections, and particularly the Imam Bukhari and Muslim, have done whatever was humanly possible to put the reliability of every Tradition to a very rigorous test—a far more rigorous test than European historians usually apply to any historical documents.<sup>47</sup>

Again.

---

46. Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads*, Lahore, 1963, pp. 120-123.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

It requires only some insight into the psychological side of the problem in order to relegate such assumptions into the sphere of pure fancy. The tremendous impression which the personality of the Prophet has made on these men and women is an outstanding fact of human history; and, moreover, it is extremely well *documented* by history. Is it conceivable that people who were ready to sacrifice themselves and all they possessed at the bidding of the Apostle of God would play tricks with his words? The Prophet had said: "Whoever intentionally lies about me will take his place in the Fire." (*Sahih-al-Bukhari, Sunan Abu Daud, Jami at-Tirmidhi, Sunan Ibn Majah, Sunan al-Darimi, Musand Ibn Hanbal*).

This the Companions knew; they believed implicitly in the words of the Prophet whom they regarded as the Speaker of God; and is it probable, from the psychological point of view, that they disregarded this very definite injunction.<sup>48</sup>

It is this wonderful record about the character and life-history of the prophet that impels us to hold him up as the perfect model for mankind. No one can serve as a model for the human race in every phase of his life unless he is intimately known to the people. Muhammad (peace be upon him) admirably stands this test. Even a person like Margoliouth, in spite of being an adverse critic of Islam, admits:

The biographers of the Prophet *Muhammed* form a long series which it is impossible to end, but in which it would be honourable to find a place.<sup>49</sup>

John Davenport in his book *An Apology for Muhammad and*

---

48. Muhammad Asad, *op. cit.*, 123-24.

49. Margoliouth, D. S., *Muhammad and the Rise of Islam*, London, 1905, p. 1



the Koran states:

It may be truly affirmed that of all known legislators and conquerors not one can be named the history of whose life has been written with greater authenticity and fuller detail than that of Muhammad.<sup>50</sup>

Rev. Bosworth Smith, in his work *Mohammed and Mohammedanism* significantly remarks:

We know less of Zoroaster and Confucius than we do of Solon and Socrates: less of Moses and Buddha than we do of Ambrose and Augustine. We know indeed some fragments of a fragment of Christ's life; but who can lift the veil of the thirty years that prepared the way for the three.....What do we know of his mother, of his home life, of his early friends, and of his relation to them, of the gradual dawning, or, it may be the sudden revelation of his divine mission. How many questions about him occur to each of us that must always remain questions?

But in *Mohammedanism* everything is different; here instead of the shadowy and the mysterious we have history. We know as much of Mohammed as we do even of Luther and Milton. The mythical, the legendary, the supernatural is almost wanting in the original Arab authorities, or at all events can easily be distinguished from what is historical. Nobody here is the dupe of himself or of others; there is the full light of day upon all that that light can ever reach at all.<sup>51</sup>

This aspect of Muhammad's life will be better appreciated if a slight comparison is drawn between him and other seers of the world. Zoroaster, who is said to have held sway over a

---

50. John Davenport, *An Apology for Muhammad and the Koran*, edited by M. Amin, Lahore, 1944, p.1.

51. Rev. Bosworth Smith, *Mohammedanism*, London, 1876, pp. 16-18.

large part of Persia and the neighbouring lands, has a very doubtful chronological record of his deeds and events in life. Nothing can be said with certainty about the place where he was born, where he was brought up, the clan to which he belonged, the language which he spoke and the place where he lies buried. The most that can be said about him is that he was born somewhere in Azarbaijan, that Histasps accepted his mission and made it the State religion.

Buddha is another well-known religious leader. All that we know about him today is partly through the inscriptions of Asoka and Chandra Gupta and partly through the writings of travellers like Huen Tsang and Fieshan and the Greek historians like Herodotus. That is to say, it is through the help of the kings of the Maurya dynasty that the probable period of his life is determined.

When we look into the long life of the prophets of Israel, we find that their lives too are shrouded in mystery. The Old Testament which gives some glimpses of the life of Moses was recorded some three hundred years after his death and even this record is not explicit and above doubt. It contains a good deal which is highly controversial and uncertain and, instead of throwing light on the sacred life of that prophet, it gives rise to blasphemous misgivings about his blessed personality.

The life of Jesus suffers from the same handicap. The New Testament which we possess today and which depicts his life and personality is a much later production, recorded by people who had not even seen him. There hangs doubt about its original source, the time when it was compiled, and the language in which it was revealed, so much so that some scholars of the Rationalist School even go to the extent of considering Christ a legendary figure based on Greek mythology. It is the Holy Qur'an which has removed the cobwebs of doubt and suspicion which are woven round him

and has in very clear terms laid down that Christ was the prophet of God, both the beginning and the end of whose life were miraculous and he, like all other prophets, summoned people to righteousness. So far as the Christian literature is concerned, we find nothing but a halo of unreality and deification cast around his august person.

In the history of religions this fact comes boldly into prominence that, with the honourable exception of Muhammad (peace be upon him), not a single prophet has to his credit a detailed, connected, authentic historical account of his life to entitle him to be justifiably considered and accepted as an ideal personality. It is the personality of Muhammad and Muhammad alone whose every word and deed was preserved with full authenticity by his devoted followers and then passed on with the utmost care as the most sacred trust to the coming generations.

A cursory glance through any Hadith collection will give an idea of how accurately and carefully the minutest details of the Prophet's life and teachings have been recorded. There one finds astonishing details of his features, limbs of his body, his gait, the manner of his conversation and speech, his smile, dress, food, sleep, his manner of eating, drinking and relaxing, his love for perfumes, his elegance, catholicity of his taste, his fondness for riding, his zest for worship, his mode of salutation, his facial expression, his behaviour in joy and temper, his wars, his way of offering condolence, his way of offering prayers and observing fasts, his pilgrimages, his intense devotion to God, his noble feelings and sentiments, his perseverance, his dealings with his fellow-beings, his honesty, his hospitality, his deep rooted sympathy for his own kith and kin, his dealings with strangers, with enemies; his hatred for back-biting and vanity, his simplicity, his bravery, his determination, his truthfulness, his adherence to his promises, his forgiveness, his behaviour towards his equals, towards his elders and

youngers, his treatment of women, his kindness to mankind and animals, his means of livelihood, his experiences as a traveller, as a warrior, as a law-giver, as a leader, as a statesman, as a craftsman, as a trader, as a father, as a brother, as a ruler, as a saint, as a pious hermit, as an arbitrator; in fact all phases and aspects of his life have been carefully recorded.<sup>52</sup>

One is amazed at his boldness and courage with which he laid open before the people not only his public but also his private life. Who can stand the ordeal of thus voluntarily offering himself as an object of observation for all the twenty four hours throughout his life? Only a person of unusual integrity and honesty, possessing a high degree of self-confidence, self-control, and self-determination could do it. It was Muhammad (peace be upon him) alone who admirably stood this test. He not only permitted people to peep into the innermost chambers of his sacred life, but also exhorted them to broadcast its details to others because even these facets were as divinely illuminated as his public career. A Muslim is, therefore, enjoined to follow the Prophet's example in his private life with the same sincerity and faithfulness as he is commanded in respect of the sphere of his public life. Every word that he uttered and every action that he performed are, in fact, the public trust to be faithfully handed over to humanity from generation to generation as all these were divinely inspired, for the Qur'an has testified that the Prophet "does not speak out of his own desire."<sup>53</sup> That is, he speaks only when there is an objective necessity, and he does this because God orders him to do so. In a number of verses of the Holy Qur'an the Muslims are enjoined to accept this guidance in all spheres of life, for example: Whatever the

---

52. Besides *Sihah Sittah*, one should go through *Shamail al-Tirmidhi*, *Sahifah of Qadi Iyad*, *Zad-al-Maad of Ibn al-Qayyim* to find various heads under which the Prophet's life has been described.

53. *The Quran*, liii, 8.

Apostle commands you, accept, and whatever he forbids you, avoid.<sup>54</sup>

The work of the great traditionists who recorded the different aspects of the life of Muhammad (may the peace of Allah be upon him) is not only marked by thoroughness and minuteness but is distinguished for its perfect honesty, impartiality, and objectivity. It was perhaps due to this characteristic which aimed at scientific precision that history was developed in the form of systematic knowledge in which every event was preserved with meticulous care for details; even minor events were reported as faithfully as those of great magnitude. "This method," observes Rom Landau, "offers the contemporary historian the delight of discovering history that is written objectively. The collections which have no form other than chronology allow for no individual psychological interpretation. Every source is so well documented that history written in this method becomes itself a primary source."<sup>55</sup>

When such a high standard of objectivity is aimed at in narrating the ordinary events of life, one can well imagine the unusually high degree of honesty and accuracy which must have been observed by traditionists in recording the life of the last of the prophets.

The unanimously accepted qualifications necessary for a transmitter of the Hadith can give the reader an idea of the enviably high standard maintained in this branch of knowledge. In the words of Shafi'i:

The transmitter must be of firm faith, well reputed for his integrity and truthfulness in what he reports. He should be able to comprehend fully its contents and should know well how the change in expression

---

54. Ibid., lix, 7.

55. Rom Landau. *Islam and the Arabs*, London, 1958, pp. 204-5.

affects the shades of meaning expressed therein. He should report verbatim what he learnt from his teachers, and not narrate in his own words the sense of what he had learnt. He must possess a retentive memory and should remember his book well, if he reported from it. He should be free from making a report on the authority of those whom he met, what he did learn from them. His report must be in agreement with what has been reported by those who are recognised to have had good memory. If they also have transmitted these reports.<sup>56</sup>

It was due to this high standard that the purity and genuineness of the Hadith was preserved, despite all attempts at corruption. There were numerous truth-loving, God-fearing, honest, and critical-minded traditionists who, without caring the least for personalities and parties, for power and public opinion or for any personal interest, collected the traditions, examined them critically in the light of exceedingly high criteria, and accepted or rejected them. The traditionists kept constantly reminding the people of the importance of the Hadith and warned them to be careful with regard to the source of its emanation. Ta'us ibn Kaysan of Yemen had advised the students of Hadith to learn it from the pious persons only, and Abu al 'Aliya relates that whenever a seeker for Hadith went to any traditionist to learn it from him, he inquired at first about the piety of his would be teacher."<sup>57</sup>

Imam Muslim, the well-known traditionist, in his scholarly introduction to his famous compilation, has succinctly discussed this point. We reproduce below some of his observations:

---

56. Imam Shafi, *Risalah*, ed. by Ahmad Shakir, Cairo, 1937, p. 99.

57. Abu Muhammad al-Darimi, *Sunnan*, quoted by Dr. Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, op. cit., p. 60.

The Prophet said: Attributing lie to me is not like that of attributing lie to other people, and any person who dares to commit this offence should seek his abode in hell.<sup>58</sup>

The Prophet too had exhorted people to examine critically any information that comes to them from any quarter:

It is sufficient for man to be claimed as liar, who accepts everything which he hears and then passes it on to others.<sup>59</sup>

These grim warnings are clearly indicative of the fact that attributing anything to the Holy Prophet is a matter of utmost importance and entails heavy responsibility. One should, therefore, be extremely cautious in this respect.

Abi al-Zinad said: I found in Medina one hundred traditionists who were quite good and dependable in their daily life but as they did not come up to the required standard demanded of a narrator of Hadith, the traditions related by them were not therefore, accepted as valid.<sup>60</sup>

Imam Muslim, like so many other traditionist, is of opinion that the *Isnad* (chain of transmitters of the Hadith) is indispensable for this system.

In very early days the *Isnad* were not demanded of the transmitters, but with the spread of *Fitnah* (dissension) it became quite essential so as to distinguish truth from falsehood.

A careful scrutiny of those who related traditions was continued with unabated vigour by a large number of Hadith

---

58. *Sahih Muslim*, Introduction, Cairo, p. 8.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*, p.11.

scholars in the succeeding generation of the traditionists. Imam Waki' was a great *Muhaddith*, but he would not accept the Hadith related to him even by his father on his authority alone, because he was an official in the public treasury. He accepted his traditions only when they were supported by others also. Mas'udi is another traditionist. Imam Ma'adh ibn Ma'adh once paid him a visit and found that, his memory having faded, he had to depend upon his written record. The Imam at once declared his memory to be unreliable.<sup>62</sup> It was this Ma'adh who was once offered ten thousand gold coins if he attested the reliability of a person in the matter of Hadith or he should refrain from giving his opinion, but he rejected this offer outright and said, "I cannot conceal the truth."<sup>62</sup>

Malik Ibn Anas (92-179/711-795), during his sojourn in Medina in search of Hadith, found seventy such traditionists in the Prophet's mosque who had gathered their knowledge from the Companions and the Successors, but he accepted traditions from such of them only as were trustworthy, and whenever he had any doubt with regard to a part of a tradition he gave up the whole of it as unreliable.<sup>63</sup> He held that one should not accept the traditions from persons who held erroneous views and propagated them, nor from those who told lies in ordinary affairs of life (even if their trustworthiness as Hadith-narrators was not doubted), nor from such eminent, honest, and pious persons who were not conversant with the subject-matter of the traditions which they related.<sup>64</sup>

The sincere devotees of the Hadith were not content merely with the scrutiny of the reporters of the traditions, but

---

61. Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani, *Tahhib-al-Tahhib*, Hyderabad, Vol. II, p. 130.

62. Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 211.

63. Abu Zakariya Yahya al-Numani, *Tahhib al-Asm'*, quoted in Dr. Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, op. cit., p. 61.

64. Ibid., p. 61.



they tried to make known the life and character of the interested forgers and of the incompetent and erroneous transmitters so that fake traditions should not gain currency, and if at all they got circulated they should be easily detected and discarded. In the introduction to his collection, Imam Muslim lays much stress on this point and states that pointing out faults of the traditionists and publicising them does not amount to backbiting, so strictly prohibited in Islam.<sup>65</sup> This work is of utmost importance from the religious point of view and it should, therefore, be undertaken with the sanctity of worship.

Yahya bin Sa'id says: I once asked Sufyan, Shu'bah, Malik, Ibn 'Uyaynah, (who were all great traditionists) if anyone seeks any information about the one who is not reliable in the transmission of Hadith should I respond to his demand or not? They all said unanimously, "You should let him know that the man is not trustworthy."<sup>66</sup>

As a consequence, there soon developed a special branch of learning in which the transmitters' reliability was critically appraised from the recorded accounts of their life and character. This biographical literature is highly perfect and exhaustively informative and yet it remains unparalleled. "The glory of the Muhammadan literature," says Dr. Sprenger, "is its literary biographies.....There is no nation, nor has there been any which, like them, has, during twelve centuries, narrated the life of every man of letters."<sup>67</sup>

To form an idea of the magnitude of these biographical writings let us name a few standard works: Ibn Sa'd's *Tabaqat* contains the biographies of more than 4, 000 traditionists; al-Bukhari's *Ta'rikh* deals with more than

---

65. *Sahih Muslim*, Introduction, p. 12.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

67. Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani. *al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah*, Vol, I, p.1.

24,000 traditionists; al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in his *Ta'rikh al-Baghdad* ("History of Baghdad") gives short biographies of 7,831 persons; Ibn 'Asakir in the eighty volumes of his "History of Damascus," collected together the biographies of a much larger number of people; Ibn Hajar in his *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* and *Mizan al-I'tidal*, summarised the biographical notes of 12,415 and 12,343 narrators of traditions respectively.<sup>68</sup>

These are not just biographical sketches of Hadith-narrators but one may find in them impartial and objective estimates of their character. The specialists of *Asma' al-Rijal* were well-known for their honesty and integrity. They expressed their findings frankly and boldly, without any fear or favour either of the government or of the public; the preservation of the purity of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was always the one consideration uppermost in their minds. Ibn Sa'd, for example, was a *mawla* of the Hashimites, but he did not take sides with any party. He remained aloof from the power politics of his day and expressed honest opinions about the persons concerned.

These noble souls who were out to explore the lives of narrators were so cautious that they would declare them unreliable at the slightest act of omission or commission on their part. It is said, Baqiyya bin Walid was an honest man, but since he accepted traditions from all sorts of narrators, his reliability was held to be doubtful. Ibrahim al-Nakha'i informed his pupils of the doubtful character of al-Harith, and also asked them to keep away from Mughirah bin sa'id, and Abu 'Abd al-Rahim, for they were liars.<sup>69</sup>

Such was the care exercised by these commentators that

---

68. Dr. Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, pp. 170-71.

69. *Sahih Muslim*, Introduction, pp. 14-15.

even the pious and God-loving people of the Muslim society would not escape their critical probe. They examined them according to their high standard and then vouched their reliability. The narration of Hadith is an art which, besides piety and love of God, requires special qualifications for attaining proficiency in it. It is no accident, therefore, that, in the history of Hadith literature, along with Sufi traditionists such as Hasan al Basri, Sufyan Thawri, 'Abd Allah ibn Mubarak, Fudayl ibn Ayad, Waki ibn al-Jarrah, who combined in them the qualities of a traditionists and a Sufi, we find the names of some saints and philosophers, though well-known for their religious devotion and service to Islam, were not accepted as reliable traditionists.<sup>70</sup> The name of Imam Ghazali can even be cited in this connection. This does not cast any aspersion on the character of Ghazali and others like him as traditionists. From the point of view of a traditionist, their only drawback was that, being wholly absorbed in their spiritual meditations and contemplations, they could not acquire the required skill to distinguish between a genuine Hadith and a fake one and thus accepted whatever was attributed to the Holy Prophet. The critics of Hadith, therefore, despite eminent qualities of head and heart and the high esteem in which they are held in Muslim society, denied them the status of traditionists and urged the people to examine critically all the traditions narrated by them in order to ensure their authenticity.

Where can one find such objectivity, thoroughness, and care except in the biographical records of Muhammad (may peace of Allah be upon him)?

---

70. *Sahih Muslim*, Introduction p.p. 14-15.

## THE FINALITY OF PROPHETHOOD

WE have already discussed that Muhammad (peace be upon him!)<sup>1</sup> is the last of the prophets commissioned by God to deliver His message to humanity. His teachings are, therefore, comprehensive, final, and perfect. His sacred life in all its details has been preserved. Its delineation in history is clear and complete. Humanity can confidently look up to him for guidance.

A new prophet was generally raised when the teachings of the earlier prophets were either obliterated or corrupted, or when they required some modification. Since the dispensations of Muhammad are final, universal, complete, and fully preserved, there is not the least scope or necessity for the advent of a new prophet. This concept of the finality of prophethood has remained throughout Islamic history one of the basic principles of Islam, which has its deep imprint on the outlook, behaviour, and feelings of the Muslims.

According to the Old Testament and the New Testament, every prophet before Muhammad (peace be upon him!) foretold the advent of a new messenger. But in the Holy Qur'an, not even a remote reference is to be found to lead one to conclude that, after Muhammad, a new prophet would ever be raised to finalise the message of God. On the other hand, we find some very clear verses :<sup>2</sup>

---

1. The author has discussed this subject in his forthcoming book: *The life of Muhammad*.

2. Fakhr al-Din al Razi, in his famous commentary *Tafsir Kabir*, has thus elucidated this point with reference to these verses:

This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you and have chosen for you a Code of life—al-Islam.<sup>3</sup>

Muhammad (peace be upon him!) is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Apostle of God and the last of the prophets.<sup>4</sup>

Say (O Muhammad!): O Mankind! lo! I am the messenger of Allah to you all, (the messenger) of Him unto Whom belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth.<sup>5</sup>

The finality of prophethood in Muhammad (peace be upon him!) has also been stressed in authentic *Ahadith*. We reproduce below some of them in order to give an idea to the reader of the vital importance of this fundamental principle:

There were the Apostles who led the sons of Israel to the path of righteousness. Whenever any prophet dies, he was succeeded by another. But no prophet would come after me. This function would be performed by the caliphs.<sup>6</sup>

My relation to the (long chain of) prophets (can be understood by) the parable of a palace; the palace was most beautifully built: superb and fine. There was left, however, the space of a brick. The people went

---

"The religion of God was never defective; it was always free from all kinds of errors. The different codes of life revealed unto various prophets were perfect with reference to their times and their particular requirements. God Almighty was fully aware of the fact that the demands of a changing life would necessitate a change in the *Shariah*, so it was replaced by a new one; but with the advent of Muhammad the *Shariah* was revealed which is perfect in every respect and it is to be kept as a living force till the Day of Resurrection. In short, although the previous codes of life were perfect, yet they were time-bound, whereas the *Shariah of Islam* is perfect relative to time and space. It is in this context that the words "Today have I perfected for you your religion" are to be understood."

3. The Quran, v.3., 4. Ibid., xxxiii. 40., 5. Ibid., vii. 158.

6. Bukhari, "Kitab al-Manaqib".

round the palace and asked in amazement; Why is it that this space was not filled up. I have filled in this gap and I am the last of the prophets.<sup>7</sup>

'Abd al-Rahman ibn Jubayr said, "I heard 'Abd Allah bin 'Amr ibn al-As saying this: one day the Holy Prophet came to us. The expression of his face indicated as if he was going to depart from us and said: 'I am Prophet Muhammad who can neither read nor write' (he repeated these words three times) and there is no prophet after me'.<sup>8</sup>

There is no prophet after me and there is no *ummah* after my *ummah*.<sup>9</sup>

This belief is so fundamental and pervasive and there is such complete unanimity about it that it has never been controverted. It has always remained an undisputed article of faith—a bedrock on which was built, not only the metaphysical structure of Islam, but also its cultural edifice. This is why any person laying claim to prophethood after Muhammad was unhesitatingly condemned as an apostate; the '*ulama*' did not even like to enter into argumentation with such a person.

It is recorded that during the time of Imam Abu Hanifah a person claimed to be a prophet and requested the Imam to allow him an audience in order to discuss the validity of his claim. The great jurist of Islamic Law rightly remarked:

Anyone who would demand from him any proof (of his prophethood) would become *Kafir* since the Prophet, Muhammad has emphatically said; "No prophet will come after me."<sup>10</sup>

---

7. Ibid., Chapter "Khatam al-Nabiyyin."

8. *Musnad Ahmad*, Narrations from 'Abd Allah ibn. 'Amr.

9. *Bayhaqi, Kitab-ur-Ruya*'.

10. *Ibn Ahmad al-Makki, Manaqib Imam al-A'zam Abi Hanifah*, quoted by Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi in his *Tafhim al-Quran*, Commentary of the Holy Quran.

Similarly, Imam Ghazali has said:

There is complete agreement in the whole of the *ummah* on this injunction (There is no prophethood after me). It signifies the fact that no prophet is to be raised after Muhammad. This injunction is so clear and unequivocal that it leaves no scope—not the least for any other interpretation. Anyone who interprets it in any other way, is an unbeliever, his writing is nonsensical and his interpretation is fit to be called a heresy and its writer a *Kafir*: since he is falsifying that very fundamental on which there is consensus in the *ummah*.<sup>11</sup>

All these expositions are sufficient to conclude that the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him!), like his teachings, is universal and is not hemmed in by time and space:

We have sent thee (Muhammad) as a messenger unto mankind and Allah is sufficient as a witness.<sup>12</sup>

The eminent scholar Qadi 'Iyad, in his famous book *al-Shifa'*, has succinctly remarked:

Anyone who claimed to be a shareholder in the prophethood of Muhammad, either in his own lifetime or after him, is an apostate.

The Eiswaya, a group of the Jews, believed in the genuineness of Muhammad's prophethood but confined that to the bounds of Arabia. The Karramiyah too, believed him as a prophet, but not the last one.... They were of the opinion that new prophets would be raised even after him. All these people stand outside the fold of Islam and in fact deny the prophethood of Muhammad, since he has stressed in clear

---

11. *Al-Iqtisad fial-'Itiqad*, p. 113, quoted by Maududi in his *Tafhim*.

12. The Quran, iv. 79.

words that no prophet would come after him and it has been made explicit by Allah that Muhammad is the last of the prophets and he has been sent to guide the whole human race.<sup>13</sup>

Imam Shafi'i has also stressed this point:

Allah decided to send Muhammad to lead man out of chaotic condition. This was not a novelty; for since mankind was but one people. God sent prophets to announce glad tidings and to warn people. The mission with which Muhammad was charged was a part of that carried on by the prophetic chain although it came to be the last link of it.<sup>14</sup>

Allah charged Muhammad with His Mission because he was the noblest and the most perfect of His creation. Muhammad was to inaugurate His mercifulness and to seal prophethood. He was to transmit Allah's word and to show man the way to the right path. The word which Muhammad received and transmitted was the genuine word. It was free from human modifications and universalisation of all that Allah had revealed previously.<sup>15</sup>

The elucidations of the Holy Qur'an, of authentic traditions, and those of the eminent scholars on this vital issue leave no doubt about the fact that no prophet would ever be raised after Muhammad (peace be upon him!). He alone is thus the focus of the believers' loyalties, all other loyalties being subservient to him. His teachings and his blessed personality alone are to be kept as the highest ideals for them and it is in strict adherence to his precept and practice that the salvation of this world and that of the

---

13. Qadi 'Iyad, *al-Shifa*, Egypt, Vol. II, pp. 246-7.

14. Khalil Semaan, Tr., *Ash-Shah'i's Risalah*, Lahore, 1961, pp. 14-5.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 15.



hereafter lies. The Holy Qur'an has drawn attention to this in the following words:

Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembereth Allah very much.<sup>16</sup>

Here the Almighty God has exhorted the Muslims to follow sincerely and cheerfully the path shown to them by the last of the prophets, Muhammad (peace be upon him!). This is the only means whereby they can please their Creator and their Master. The Qur'an speaks of this in unequivocal terms:

Whose obeys the messenger, obeys Allah. Lo! those who swear allegiance unto thee (Muhammad) swear allegiance only unto Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands. So, whosoever breaketh his oath, breaketh it only to his soul's hurt: while whosoever keepeth his covenant with Allah, on him will He bestows immense reward.<sup>17</sup>

The saying of (all true) believers when they appeal unto Allah and His messenger to judge between them is only that they say: We hear and we obey, and such are successful. He who obeyeth Allah and His messenger, and feareth Allah and keepeth duty (up to Him): such indeed are the victorious!<sup>18</sup>

His word is the last word and his judgment in every matter is, therefore, final. This is an article of faith to be accepted ungrudgingly. The Holy Qur'an has referred to this in these words:

But nay, by the Lord, they will not believe until they make thee judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which you decide and submit with full submission!<sup>19</sup>

---

16. xxxiii. 21. 17. xlviii. 10. 18. xxiv. 52. 19. vi. 65

It does not become a Muslim man or Muslim woman when Allah and His messenger have decided an affair (for them) that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair : and whoso is rebellious to Allah and His messenger, he verily goes away in error manifest.<sup>20</sup>

Whatever the Prophet gives you, accept, and whatever he forbids you, avoid.<sup>21</sup>

The Holy Qur'an has very clearly said that any person who refuses to accept the verdict of Muhammad (peace be upon him!) as final has no right to claim himself a Muslim :

And they say: We believe in Allah and the messenger and we obey them after that faction of them turn away. Such are not believers.<sup>22</sup>

Faith in the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him!) necessitates intense love and profound respect for the divine message brought by him and for his pious life. A Muslim can acquit himself of his responsibility towards Allah and His Apostle only when he is moved to obedience by the sacred sentiment of love :

Say (O Muhammad! to mankind): If ye love Allah, follow me, Allah will love you and forgive your sins. Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.<sup>23</sup>

Say: If your fathers, and your sons, and your brethren, and your wives and your tribe and the wealth you have acquired, and merchandise for which ye fear that there will be slump and dwellings ye desire are dearer to you than Allah and His messenger and striving in His way, then wait till Allah bringeth His Command to pass.<sup>24</sup>

---

20. xxxiii. 36.      21. lix. 7.

22. xxiv. 47.      23. iii. 31.

24. ix. 24.

The Holy Qur'an has explained in very clear terms that obedience, devoid of love, does not fulfil the true purpose of faith in the prophethood. Islam signifies the willing surrender of oneself to God Almighty. It is not an act of coercion, but a cheerful acceptance of the guidance of Muhammad (peace be upon him!). Faith is, therefore, nurtured in the heart of people and then sprouts forth in the form of individual and social behaviour, having a peculiar pattern of its own. The Holy Qur'an has stressed this point further:

The wandering Arabs say: We believe. Say (unto them, Muhammad): Ye believe not, but rather say: We submit, for faith hath not entered into their hearts.<sup>25</sup>

The verse clearly signifies that the faith which is not implanted deep in the heart and soul of man is not genuine faith. This fact has been elucidated by numerous authentic traditions. The Prophet once said:

None amongst you is a true believer unless his love for me predominates over love for everything else including that of his family, his property, and all human beings.<sup>26</sup>

Whoso is fully satisfied with Allah as his Lord, with Islam as his code of life, and with Muhammad as his prophet, he in fact taste the sweetness of faith.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, deep love for the Prophet is the necessary prerequisite of faith. The concept of love in Islam, however, is not one that would negate reasons. Love for the Holy Prophet is never blind: it is born of wisdom and intelligence. We have very sound reasons to develop a kind of emotional attachment with Muhammad (peace be upon him!) because

---

25. *xlvi. 14.*

26. *Sahih. Muslim: "Book of Faith".*

27. *Ibid, p. 46.*

his teachings and personality is a source of light and inspiration for us. Humanity owes a deep debt of gratitude to him. The true concept of love for the Holy Prophet signifies the fact that what is most honouring to God is at the same time most ennobling for man—the concept of a great personality which does not only influence our sense or logical understanding, but the whole of our being; which does not constrain us mechanically to receive the truth, but enables us to know it; which does not tell us merely what God would have us believe, but raises us into its consciousness by intelligent sympathy with His Mind and Will. It thus becomes evident that to inculcate love for Muhammad (peace be upon him!), devoid of reason, is not the objective of Islam. Love for the Prophet is based on reason and can be eminently achieved by conscious adherence to his teachings. Hence the objective necessity for a Muslim follows the life-example of the Holy Prophet, along with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, because what the Prophet ordains is not the outcome of his personal whim, but the result of divine inspiration.

A denial of the eternal validity of the Sunnah of the Prophet amounts to denial of Allah's verdict that the Prophet does not speak of his own desire. This point has been stressed in a well-known hadith:

Any one who loves my Sunnah loves me and whosoever loves me will find himself by my side in paradise (Tirmidhi).

Adherence to the Sunnah is a matter of paramount importance in Islam, since it is the only means whereby the spiritual influence of that noble personality is made a real, ever-recurring factor in our existence. The real object of the Sunnah is not, as hostile critics presume, the breeding of Pharisees and dry formalists, but of conscious, determined, deep-hearted men of faith. A man who is designed as 'a

Mercy for the Worlds' cannot be but divinely-inspired. Whatever the Prophet commanded must be carried out and whatever he did must be followed, not in mechanical imitation, but as a deliberate act of obedience to him, for, in ordering us to do this or to avoid that, the Prophet had some object in view, which he thought to be indispensable for the spiritual and social welfare of man. This object, however, is sometimes clearly discernible; sometimes more or less hidden to the untrained eyes of the average man; sometimes we can understand the deep aim of a teaching of the Prophet, and sometimes only its superficial immediate purposes. Whatever may be the case, we are bound to follow the Prophet's commands provided their authenticity is reasonably established; for it is said in the Qur'an about the Prophet: "He does not speak of his own desire."<sup>28</sup>

To ignore or to set aside his guidance or certain elements of it would mean nothing less than an ungrateful rejection or underestimation of God's Mercy. It would mean, furthermore, that the entire message of Islam was intended, not as a final, but only as an alternative solution of man's problems, and that it is left to our discretion to choose, this or some other, perhaps equally true and useful, solution. This easy—because morally and practically not in the least obliging—principle might lead anywhere, but, surely, not to the spirit of Islam.<sup>29</sup>

Islam, as a fulfilment of God's favour to man—a perfect self-contained ideology, a programme of life, a spiritual guidance, a socio-economic code—is based on the Qur'an and its implications as explained by the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (peace be upon him!). The Sunnah is thus one of the bases on which the edifice of the Islamic Shari'ah has been built. The Holy Prophet has made a pointed reference

---

28. III, 8.

29. Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads*, Lahore, 1963, p. 122.

to this:

I have left unto you two things—the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet: he who holds them strongly will never go astray.<sup>30</sup>

The Prophet also exhorted his followers to keep the Sunnah free from all kinds of impurities because that would corrupt the whole system of the Shari'ah:

The best word is that of God and the best course of life is that of Muhammad (peace be upon him!). The worst things are innovations (in religion) and every innovation is an error.<sup>31</sup>

Follow my path and the path of my righteous Caliphs: adhere to it strictly. Beware of innovation. Every new thing is a *bid'ah* and every *bid'ah* is an error.<sup>32</sup>

From the preceding discussion, we have seen that the idea of perfection of religion and the culmination of prophethood in the august personality of Muhammad (peace be upon him!) implies that the Qur'an and the Sunnah really do provide authentic answers to all exigencies of life. Being a direct outcome of divine inspiration, the two sources are far too great, far too majestic, to be subjected to a final interpretation by any human being after the Prophet. The concept of perfection and finality in the Book and the Prophethood has exercised a great influence on the development of Muslim thought and society and as such has been a source of great interest for the scholars of every age.

The well-known philosopher-historian Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Taymiyyah and his illustrious disciple Ibn al-Qayyim, Shah Waliullah of Delhi in the past and Muhammad Iqbal

---

30. Sahih Bukhari, "*Kitab al-F'tisam bi al-Kitab w-al-Sunnah*".

31. Ibid.      32. Abu Dawud, "*Kitab al-Sunnah*."

of our own times are some of the Muslim thinkers who have discussed the intellectual, social, and political implications of the finality of prophethood. To cite Iqbal:

The intellectual value of the idea is that it tends to create an independent critical attitude towards mystic experience by generating the belief that all personal authority, claiming a supernatural origin, has come to an end in the history of man. This kind of belief is a psychological force which inhibits the growth of such authority.

The function of the idea is to open up fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of man's inner experience. Just as the first half of the formula (*There is no god but Allah*) of Islam has created and fostered the spirit of a critical observation of man's outer experience by divesting the forces of nature of that divine character with which earlier cultures have clothed them. Mystic experience, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded by a Muslim as perfectly natural experience.<sup>33</sup>

Such a view about the internal experience of man has enabled the Muslims to build up into a solid framework of science all those endless series of transient impressions which go by the name of religious experience. It has, in fact, provided them a unifying concentrating power amidst the flux of mystical experiences, in order to reclaim them from chaos, and to identify, relate, compare and co-ordinate them into coherent values of objective worth. This constant amidst the variable, this unifying power, is the belief that since prophethood has been culminated, perfected, and finalised in the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him!), therefore, his teachings and experiences alone are absolute

---

33. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 127.

and final in the real sense of the term and none else, however brilliant his findings and experiences might be, can claim unconditional obedience. I am reproducing below some statements of a few renowned mystics. Shaykh 'Ali ibn 'Uthman al-Hujwayri in his book *Kashf al-Mahjub* said:

Anyone who claims to be a standard-bearer of righteousness, he must produce some evidence in support of his claim and no evidence is more reliable than that of following the footsteps of the Holy Prophet.<sup>34</sup>

Abul Qasim Qushayri remarked:

Mysticism in Islam depends only on following the Shari'ah. A Muslim should abstain from using things—either, forbidden or doubtful. He should not pollute his mind with different vanities. He should, in fact, spend his time in remembering Allah.<sup>35</sup>

Shaykh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani, in his book *Futuh al-Ghayb*, has written:

My will is: Fear Allah, and obey Him. Follow strictly the commands of the Shari'ah and cleanse your heart from all impure thoughts.<sup>36</sup>

Shaykh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi said:

The more zealously a person follows the steps of the Holy Prophet, the great is the love of God showered upon him.<sup>37</sup>

There is no dearth of such statements in the writings of the mystics of Islam. It will be seen that even those who had had very deep mystical or internal experiences claimed no

---

34. Shaykh 'Ali ibn 'Uthman al-Hujwayri, *Kashf al-Mahjub*, p. 13.

35. *Al-Rasa'il al-Qushayriyah*, p. 185.

36. Shaykh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani, *Futuh al-Ghayb*, p. 395.

37. Shaykh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, p. 26.



absoluteness for their statements. Instead of asking their followers to accept their statements as final truths, they urged their statements to test these on the touchstone of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and follow their statements only if they stood the test.

This attitude is the result of the fundamental belief that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him!) is the last of the Prophets and, as such, he is the highest ideal for humanity. It is in the light of his teachings alone that the value of every piece of knowledge and every experience is to be measured.

Moreover, single-minded devotion to the Holy Prophet has integrated the different sections of the Muslim society into one indivisible whole. This is the common base where all the Muslims stand. A Muslim, whether he is a politician, a business man, a soldier, a scholar, or a mystic, tries to follow one single path, the one which has been shown to him by the last of the Prophets.

Society is not necessarily formed by likes alone: there can be differences and demarcations. Likeness and differences are no doubt logical opposites, but their objective manifestations are related to each other. Indeed, the understanding of our likeness, in this instance, depends upon comprehension of its relation to the other, both in positive and negative aspects. Without likeness and the sense of likeness there could be no mutual recognition of belonging together and, therefore, no society exists among those who resemble one another in some degree, in body and mind, and who are near enough or intelligent enough to appreciate the fact. Society, as Giddings expressed it, rests on the consciousness of kind.<sup>38</sup>

But equally important is the role of differences in the

---

38. F. H. Giddings, quoted by Machver in *Society*, p. 7.

formation of a well-knit society. The likeness in tastes and tendencies, undoubtedly brings its members quite close to one another, but this alone does not make a society. For the constitution of a society it is essential that, if there is homogeneity within, there should be differences from without. This difference confers upon this group a distinct entity. While its internal homogeneity unifies the members of a group from within, the clear line of demarcation consolidates that unity and strengthens its identity. There is no nation worth the name in the world which has not made use of these two logical opposites. In some cases physical boundaries have served this end. Those who live within the bounds of a certain territory form one group; the love of their motherland integrates them, and thus the territorial boundaries become the means whereby we can demarcate these people from others. In other cases the factors of race or colour perform this integrating function. But Islam, as we all know, has rejected all these factors of collective integration which, in the words of Iqbal, are "essentially earth-rooted". Instead, it has set up the principle of *Tauhid* (Unity of God) as the only foundation of human unity. This, in fact, lies at the base of Muslim integration. But this is not enough. It marks off the Muslim *ummah* from the rest of the human race. In this connection, the idea of the finality of the Prophethood serves as an important and, in fact, essential supplement. Iqbal explained this in the following words:

Islam is essentially a religious community with perfectly defined boundaries—belief in the unity of God, belief in all the prophets and belief in the finality of Muhammad's prophethood. The last mentioned belief is really the factor which actually draws the line of demarcation between Muslims and non-Muslims and enables one to decide whether a certain individual or group is a part of the community or not. For example, the Brahmos believe in God, they also regard Muhammad (on whom be peace) as one of the

prophets of God, yet they cannot be regarded as part and parcel of Islam, because they, like the Qadianis, believe in the theory of perpetual revelation through prophets and do not believe in the finality of prophethood in Muhammad. No Islamic sect, as far as I know, has ever ventured to cross this line of demarcation. The Bahais in Iran have openly rejected the principle of Finality, but at the same time frankly admitted that they are a new community and not Muslims in the technical sense of the word. Accordingly to our belief Islam as a religion was revealed by God, but the existence of Islam as a society or nation depends entirely on the personality of the Holy Prophet.<sup>39</sup>

It thus becomes clear that anyone who claims to be a prophet after Muhammad is not only an impostor and a liar, but also strikes at the very root of the solidarity of the Muslim *ummah*. If anyone believes that even after Muhammad prophets would continue to come, he exposes the nation to some very severe storm of rift and conflict. By declaring unequivocally that Muhammad was the last Prophet, God has not only saved the Muslim community from every kind of disintegration, but has once and for all given in firm foundations for its permanent solidarity.

History testifies that this belief has gone a long way in fortifying the boundary-walls of the Muslim society and has saved it from menaces it has encountered at different stages of its existence. Save for this belief, it would have been difficult, nay impossible, to establish a distinct and collective entity of the Muslims. In order to defend themselves against external attacks, non-Muslim nations are forced to raise strong defensive walls around them—the walls of language, colour, race, etc. These, however, proved futile and it was

---

39. Shamloo, *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, p. 108.

soon realised that, unless every member of their respective group was deeply moved by the feeling of hatred towards others, he could not be aroused to rise in self-defence. Thus love for one's own people was soon changed into claims of superiority over others, which developed with the urge to wipe the opponents out of existence.

Islam, as I have explained above, has not made use of these sentiments of fear and hatred against others in order to forge internal cohesion or to give its followers a separate collective entity. Instead, the purpose has been served by belief in the finality of prophethood. The Holy Prophet has succinctly remarked:

Anyone who obeyed Muhammad obeyed God and he who disobeyed him disobeyed Allah and obedience to Muhammad is the line of demarcation between men (between believers and non-believers).<sup>40</sup>

Again, the idea of the finality of prophethood in Muhammad and, therefore, the end of divine revelation to man have saved the Muslim society from all sorts of evils which were found in theocratic societies. Bluntschli gives a vivid description of how the Jewish rabbis deceived people by telling them that they had received the commands of Jehovah directly:

The Divine Law was preserved in an ark overlaid with gold, over which arose the golden mercy-seat guarded by two cherubim and revered as the seal of Divine revelation. The ark and the mercy-seat were both concealed behind a curtain, in the Holy of Holies within the tabernacle which was God's residence and was carefully guarded by the priests. There he received the commands of Jehovah and then made it known to the public.<sup>41</sup>

---

40. Bukhari, "Kitāb al-ʾItisām bi Kitāb Allah".

41. J. K. Bluntschli, *The Theory of State*, pp. 350-1.

It is by these funny tricks that the priestly class became the final authority to decide between what is and what is not lawful. Their word became tantamount to the word of God and they forced people to obey their own commands, instead of those of God's. The Holy Qur'an has summed up this dismal state of affairs:

They take their priests and their anchorites to be their Lords in the derogation of God.<sup>42</sup>

Since the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him!) is the last of those noble souls through whom God revealed His will to mankind, the Muslims have been asked to adhere strictly to what they have received from God and not to allow their personal whims and caprices to sway them. The Holy Qur'an says:

Blessed is He Who hath revealed unto His slave the criterion (of right and wrong) that He may be warner of the peoples.<sup>43</sup>

This verse of the Holy Qur'an clearly lays down that the Islamic way of life should be based on those values of life which know no change, which are eternal, and which no person, however pious he might be, may alter. The Almighty God has provided every Muslim with a fine and delicate balance, the Qur'an and the Sunnah with which he can himself weigh the words and deeds of all those who came after the last of the prophets. He is not to depend upon intermediaries to approach his Lord. He knows it fully well that God has finally revealed His message to mankind through Muhammad (peace be upon him!) and it is by following him alone that he can earn the pleasure of his Lord.

This concept of the finality of prophethood has also done away with all kinds of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam and has laid the foundation of real democracy in the world.

---

42. ix. 31.      43. xxv. 1.

The root of every kind of theocratic form of government lies in the fact that a particular person or a class of persons, with the help of some supernatural dogmas, tutors the people into the belief that he has some special relationship with God and as such he enjoys some prerogatives which make him stand above the common race of mankind. Since he is infallible, no one has the right to criticise his actions. "Their citizenship is in heaven, not on earth" (*C. P. Phil.* iii, 201, and *Epistle to Diognetus* C. 5) and thus the principles and laws by which they are to be governed should be far above the ordinary laws.

Islam, by declaring that the institution of prophethood has been perfected in Muhammad, has left no scope for anyone to lay claim to his special relationship with God which can make him rise above the common law of the land. The fact is that no one person or class of persons but the whole of the Muslim *ummah* has been endowed with *Khilafah*:

Allah hath promised such of you as believe and do good works, that He will surely endow them with *Khilafah* in the earth.<sup>44</sup>

This verse shows that all Muslims have been equally favoured with the viceregency of God. Thus on the basis of this concept there evolved a society wherein there is no scope for vested interests, wherein there are no class divisions, no priesthood, no hereditary nobility—in fact, no hereditary function at all. No person, however high his social status is immune from the law since all are equal in this society. History is replete with instances of Caliphs being summoned to courts like ordinary people and publicly questioned in their very faces by the commonalty. The great 'Umar had to appear before a judge to answer a charge. Similarly, 'Ali had to plead a case against a Jew, and it was the

---

44. The Quran, xxiv. 55.

Jew who was awarded the decree.

These incidents are sufficient to show the democratic attitude of the Islamic State. No person, not even the commander of the faithful, wore the halo of divinity around him. He was rather directly responsible to his subjects for the administration of the State.

Moreover, the belief that the *Khilafah* has been delegated to the whole community and not to any particular group or individual, has entitled all citizens to elect their own leaders. Thus, the government in an Islamic society can be formed only with the consent of the Muslims, to function and remain in power only as long as it enjoys their confidence. The first official sermon of Abu Bakr, the First Caliph, on the occasion of the assumption of office, speaks eloquently of this democratic spirit:

O people, I have been elected by you as your leader, although I am not superior to you. If I do the right, support me, and if I go astray, set me right.

Truth is a trust and lie is the breach of it. The weak amongst you are strong in my eyes, till I have redressed the wrongs done to them. And the strong amongst you are weak in my eyes till I recover from them what is due. Obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Prophet, and when I disobey them, obey me not. May God bless you.<sup>45</sup>

The Caliph was so alive to the democratic spirit of Islam that he refused to be called the vicegerent of Allah, as he had not been directly appointed by Him, but had been elected by the Muslim community to exercise the delegated power on their behalf.

The working principle of this popular vicegerency has been clearly described in the following verse:

---

45. Ibn al-Kathir, *Al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah*, Vol. V, p. 248.

They manage their affairs by mutual consultation.<sup>46</sup> It should be borne in mind that this reference to mutual consultation is not without significance. In fact, it lays down an important norm which must operate in the Muslim body politic. Khatib al-Baghdadi quotes the following remarks of the Caliph 'Ali in this connection:

I said, 'O Messenger of Allah! what should we do, if after your demise, we are confronted with a problem about which we neither find anything in the Qur'an, nor have found anything from you.' He replied, "Get together the obedient (to God and His Laws) people from amongst my followers and place the matter before them for consultation. Do not make decisions on the basis of the opinion of any individual."<sup>47</sup>

What is the reason for this emphasis on mutual consultation? The answer is quite clear. Since all personal authority, claiming a supernatural origin, has come to an end, the head of an Islamic State, therefore, unlike that of a theocracy, is required to take counsel from his advisers in all important matters of administration. For, he has neither been appointed from the heavens above, nor is he possessed of any superhuman qualities.

This explicit injunction must be considered among the first principles of Islamic statecraft. It is so comprehensive that it covers all departments of human life; and it is so self-expressive and unequivocal that no attempt at arbitrary interpretation can change its purport.

Last, but not the least, since the prophethood has been declared to have come to an end, the whole Muslim community has been invested with the mission which had

---

46. The Qur'an, xlii, 38.

47. Quoted from Sayyid Abul-A'la Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, Karachi, 1960, p. 83.



originally been assigned to different prophets at various stages of human history and then finally to Muhammad the last of the apostles (peace on them all!)

We have appointed you a mediatory society, as pattern, that ye may be an example unto mankind, even as the messenger is an example unto you.<sup>48</sup>

The idea of the finality of prophethood is clearly manifested in the codification of Islamic jurisprudence. The Muslim jurists were never content merely with the study of the letters of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, but always tried to understand the spirit which animates them. They endeavoured to catch that golden thread of wisdom which runs throughout the warp and woof of the variegated pattern of different aspects of the *Shari'ah*, and with this clue in their hands they explored those questions of human life about which the Qur'an and the Sunnah contained no explicit directives. In this way they worked out the details of man's socio-political needs which are time-bound and are, therefore, variable. This is known as *ijtihad*. The student of the history of Islam is well aware of the important role that it played in maintaining that social pattern throughout the succeeding ages, the web of which was woven earlier by the Holy Prophet himself. They neither retarded the growth of the Muslim society nor did they allow it to detach itself from the two main sources of inspiration—the Qur'an and the Sunnah. At the same time these scholars focussed their attention on the discovery of the new vistas of life and establishing their link with the past. This intimate relationship with the past has given the Islamic *ummah* that specific inwardness which is essential for the society of a composite character. This uphill task has been eminently carried on by the *fuqaha* (jurists) of Islam.

---

48. The Quran, ii. 143.

The jurists of Islam had been very modest in the sphere of *ijtihad*. They had been fully conscious of the fact that life is not static but dynamic and, with the march of time, the growing complexities of an onward-moving and broadening life are sure to bring new situations. While meeting these new situations they have drawn their inspiration from the main sources of Islamic law, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. They directed their attention to them and made deductions, but at the same time they did not lose sight of the fact that their deductions, however correct and logical, could not be final and absolute since they themselves were not infallible. Hence people always had the right to accept or to reject their findings by judging them according to the touchstone of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It is significant that the Muslim scholars themselves encouraged this attitude. For example, Imam Malik said:

With the exception of the Holy prophet, we have every right to pick and choose in the findings of all others.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, Imam Abu Hanifah remarked:

Anyone who cannot see for himself on what bases of the Qur'an and Hadith have I said anything, he should not issue *fatwa* on my findings.<sup>50</sup>

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal stressed this point in the following words:

There is no scope to accept the findings of any one else, when we have with us the words of Allah and His Apostle.<sup>51</sup>

This clearly shows that nobody has the right to claim his findings to be infallible. People disagreed in the interpretation of the Law and no body thrust his personal opinion on

---

49. Sayyid Jamaluddin al-Qasimi, *Qawaid al-Tahdth*, p. 342.

50. Ibid., p. 340. 51. Ibid.

others. Freedom to accept a certain interpretation and to reject the other, has been claimed as the basic right of every Muslim. In the words of Ibn al-Qayyim:

There is freedom of choice regarding the views of anybody else in matters where his (i.e., the Law-giver's) command is not self-evident, and, therefore it is permissible, but not obligatory, to follow anybody else's conclusions—whoso refuses to accept such individual conclusions cannot be said to be guilty of disobedience to God and His Apostle. Nobody has the right to make Shar'i laws besides the law of the Prophet—and if any person arrives at certain conclusions or establishes certain rules in the light of his own understanding and interpretation (of the two sources), the community is not bound to follow him.<sup>52</sup>

It thus becomes clear that, in order to achieve this objective, the Muslim theologians must have been sympathetic towards the views of one another. They tried to broaden the fold of Islam to the extent that the Qur'an and the Hadith could allow. They never claimed any finality for their views after the finality of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him!). Thus people of all shades of opinion (provided their views did not come into conflict with the fundamentals of Islam) easily come within the fold of Islam.

This reconciling and assimilative spirit of Islam has been so strikingly original that a famous Dutch critic of Islam, Hurgonje, has remarked:

When we read the history of development of the Muhammadan Law we find that on the one hand, the doctors of every age, on the slightest stimulus, condemn one another to the point of mutual

---

52. Muhammad Hamid, Ed., Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zad al-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, P. 5

accusations of heresy and on the other hand the very same people with greater and greater unity of purpose try to reconcile the similar quarrels of their predecessors.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, Gibb says:

Islamic Law gave practical expression to the characteristic Muslim quest for unity. In all essentials it was uniform, although the various schools differed in points of detail. To its operation was due the striking convergence of social ideals and ways of life throughout the medieval Muslim world.<sup>54</sup> He further elucidates:

The Qur'an and the Tradition are not, as it is often said, the basis of Islamic legal speculation, but only its source. The real foundation is to be sought in the attitude of mind which determined the methods of utilising these sources. The first question, then, is not, 'what is laid down in the Qur'an and the Hadith?' but 'why are the Qur'an and the Hadith accepted as sources of law?' and the second is 'How are their prescriptions to be understood and applied?' To answer the first question by saying that Qur'an and the Hadith are accepted as infallible sources because they are the foundations and the title deeds of the religion of Islam is to argue in a circle. The ultimate reason is metaphysical and *a priori*. It is a conviction of the imperfection of the human reason and its inability to apprehend by its powers the real nature of the good or indeed any reality whatsoever. Absolute good and evil can therefore be known to men only through a Divine revelation mediated through

---

53. Quoted by Iqbal, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

54. H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohammadanism*, p. 10.

prophets. By Divine Providence there has been a succession of such prophets ever since, by the creation of Adam (who was the first of them) mankind has existed on this earth. The revelations accorded to these prophets were all identical in principle; but formed a gradually developing series adapted to the stages of man's development. Each in turn expanded, modified and abrogated the preceding revelations. The Qur'an is the final revelation and therefore contains the final and most perfect solutions for all questions of belief and conduct.<sup>55</sup>

It has also been pointed out by Iqbal that the constant appeal to reason and experience in the Qur'an and the emphasis it lays on nature and history as sources of human knowledge are all different aspects of the same idea of the finality of prophethood.<sup>56</sup>

The underlying reason behind this appeal is that now when the prophethood has been perfected in Muhammad (peace be upon him!), a penetrating insight into the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and a keen observation of the world around are required in order to interpret the physical and social phenomena in the light of Divine knowledge. Looking at the matter from this point of view, then, the Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world in so far as the source of his revelation is concerned, he belongs to the ancient world; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned, he belongs to the modern world. In him life discovers other sources of knowledge suitable to its new direction. It was perhaps with this new spirit of quest for other sources of knowledge that the Muslims were soon dissatisfied with the purely speculative philosophy and turned their attention towards

---

55. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

56. Iqbal, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

observation and experimentation. This led to the development of science. It is a mistake to suppose that the experimental method is a European find. During tells us that Roger Bacon's conceptions of science are more just and clear than those of his celebrated namesake. And where did Roger Bacon receive his scientific training?— but in the Muslim universities of Spain.<sup>57</sup>

The debt of our science to that of Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries or revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal more to Arab culture, it owes its existence. The ancient world was, as we saw, prescientific.

The astronomy and mathematics of Greeks were a foreign importation never thoroughly acclimatized in Greek culture. The Greeks systematized, generalized and theorized, but the patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observation, experimental inquiry were altogether alien to Greek temperament.... What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs.<sup>58</sup>

Professor Gibb observes:

The vitality of imprint, made by Muhammed on the minds of his followers, is shown by the cultural stimulus which it gave in the first instance, of course,

---

57. Ibid.

58. Robert Briffault, *Making of Humanity*, London, 1928, p. 191.

within the field of the religious movement itself. In assimilating and expanding the new teaching, system and method were introduced into the intellectual life of the Arabs. New sciences were founded: the study of the prophetic tradition, philosophy, history and above all law. The transformation is amazing when one looks back at the intellectual poverty and isolation of Medina, bare hundred years before, still more when it is remembered that this, was in the main the work of the Arabs themselves, building upon the foundations laid by Muhammed, self-evolved with none but the most meagre external influence....

It is difficult to indicate in a few words the manysided intellectual activities of this age. The older 'Muslim Sciences' of history and philosophy broadened out to embrace secular history and *belles-lettres*. Greek medical and mathematical science were made accessible in a library of translations and were developed by Persian and Arab scholars, especially in algebra, trigonometry, and optics geography—perhaps the most sensitive barometre of culture—flowered in all its branches, political, organic, mathematical, astronomical, natural sciences, and travel, and reached out to embrace the lands and civilization of far-distant people.<sup>59</sup>

It is, however, interesting to note that the keen interest of the Muslims in observation and experiment and their study of *Anfus* (self) and *Afaq* (world) as the great sources of knowledge made neither their vision earth-bound nor their outlook materialistic. They conferred on these phases of life as manifestations of the Great Reality with the sanctity of worship and were thus never lost in them.

---

59. Gibb. op. cit., pp. 6-8.

The study of the finite led them to the belief in the "Infinite". They, therefore, exploited the knowledge of the physical world in the nobler interest of a free upward movement of spiritual life. No accident, therefore, that many of the Muslim pioneers of science, whose names are now household words all over the world, were at the same time outstanding theologians. As leaders of religious thought, they extracted the essentials of the physical phenomena and social life, vitalised them according to their outlook, and thus made them an integral part of the spiritual process as enunciated by Islam. In the words of Rom Landau:

They (the Muslim scientists) were always eager to put a theory to the test, and they were never tired of experimentation. Though motivated and permeated by the spirit of their religion they would not allow dogma as interpreted by the orthodox to stand in way of their scientific research. Because their aims were not abstract but practical, they must need simplification and lucidity, yet when all is said the most significant aspect of their mathematical achievement is that it was an expression of their religious faith, for it was not dogma itself which they resisted, but distortion of dogma which the intellectually timid sought to impose.<sup>60</sup>

With the finality of prophethood in Muhammad (peace be upon him!) a gulf that yawns before the past and the present has been eminently bridged up. It is the great personality of Muhammad which is the focus of loyalty of all Muslims. Moreover, the revelation through Muhammad (peace be upon him!) of the final message of Allah to mankind, some fourteen hundred year ago, has been preserved as a living ideal for humanity of our own age and the ages to come. This has dismantled the barriers between the past and the present and has thus given a decent burial to all useless discussions which cluster around the problems of old and new. This

---

<sup>60</sup>. *Islam and the Arabs*, pp. 170-1.



conception of finality of prophethood has shown that the glaring difference which we find between the past and the present is a mirage and an illusion; in fact, they are one and the same. Man marches onward to receive illumination from the same fountainhead of Divine Light: Muhammad (peace of Allah be upon him!).

It becomes clear from the above that this article of faith—the finality of prophethood—is not merely a dogma of supernatural import. It has its social implications as well and has gone a long way in the formation of an Islamic civilisation. It has placed before the Muslim a model of perfection in the personality of Muhammad (peace be upon him!). It has provided them with a standard of moral and ethical valuation independent of ephemeral changes in time and space. It has integrated the people of different ages, races, and colours into one *ummah*. It has stimulated the intellectual curiosities of man and has thus laid the foundation of a distinct cultural pattern. In his famous poetical work *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi*, Iqbal has given expression to the vital importance of this idea of finality of prophethood for the Muslim *ummah*:

Prophethood (of Muhammad) is the basis of our organisation, our religion and our law. It creates unity in our diversity and welds us into a well-knit community which is meant to bring message of peace for mankind. If we let go our hold of this unifying life-giving conception, it means our death as a nation; for, it is this centre which has given us a dynamic unity of outlook and purpose.

The finality of prophethood is thus the choicest blessing of God upon humanity. Ibn al-Kathir in his well-known commentary of the Holy Qur'an, while discussing the implications of the verse: "Today, I have made perfect for you your religion," significantly remarks:

It is the most valuable bounty of Lord on the

ummah, that He has perfected the religion. Thus the ummah of Islam neither stands in need of any other religion besides Islam, nor any other prophet besides Muhammad (peace be upon him!). This is why Prophet Muhammad was raised as the last prophet and he was sent for the guidance of the whole human race.<sup>61</sup>

The Holy Prophet, in his own characteristically lucid style, epitomises the blessings of the finality of the prophethood in the following words:

Allah has dispensed you of all things (needed for the guidance to the path of righteousness) by means of Islam and Muhammad (peace be upon him!).<sup>62</sup>

---

61. Ibn al-Kathir, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim*, Vol. II, p. 12.

62. Bukhari, "Kitab al-Itisam bi al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah."

# INDEX

'Abd Allah ibn Mubarak, 71.  
 'Abdul Qadir Jilani, 85.  
 Abi al-Zinad, 67.  
 Absolute, the idea of the, 37.  
 Abu Bakr, 92.  
 Abu Dawud, 83.  
 Abu Hanifah, Imam, 75.  
 Abu al—'Aliya, 66.  
 Abul A'la Maududi, 75, 93,  
*'Awarif al—Ma'arif*, 85,  
 Ahmad, Shaikh of sirhand, f 27,  
 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, 91, 93,  
 'Ali ibn 'Uthman al—Hujwayri, 85,  
*Apology for Muhammad and the Koran*,  
 61,

## B

Bahais, 88.  
 Bayhaqi, 75.  
*Bidayah al—' wa al —Nihayah*, 92.  
 Bluntchli, 89.  
*Bokhari, Sahih*, f 74, f 83, f 89.  
 Bosworth, Smith, 61.  
*Brahmos*, 87.  
*Briffault, Robert*, 99.  
*Buddha*, 62.

## C

Caird, John, f11, f12, f13, f29, f30, f31.  
 Carrel, Alexis, f 23.  
 Cause, Prime, 33, 34.  
 Christ, 39, 51.  
 Consciousness, prophetic, 33, 34.

## D

Davenport, John, 59.  
 Deity, difference in mystical and prophetic  
 concepts. 39.

## E

Eddington, 22.  
 Ego, self-conscious, 11.  
 Egoism, 20.  
*Enquiries Concerning the Human  
 Understanding*, f 25, 26.  
 Experience, prophetic, 35, 36, 37, 38

## F

*Faith—and Reason*, f 19.  
 Faith-basic experience of prophetic piety,  
 36.  
 Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, f 73.  
 Farabi, al., 32.  
 Ferre Nels. F. S., f 19.  
 Fetishism, 30.

## G

Ghazali, Imam, 15, 71, 76.  
 Gibb, 97.  
 Giddings, F. H., 86.  
 God, attributes of, 39.  
 —, idea of, 30.  
 —, not a silent spectator in the drama of  
 life, 39.

## H

Hasan al-Basri, 71.  
 Heiler, Friedrich, f 37, 38, 39 40, 42.  
 Herodotus, 62.  
 Holy Book (the Qur'an), most reliable and  
 final message of Allah, 28.  
 —, free from all kinds of errors, 28.  
 —, based upon revelation, 28.

## I

Ibn 'Asakir, 70.  
 Ibn Hajr 'Asqalani, f 69.

Ibn al-Kathir, f 92.  
 Ibn Khaldun, 27.  
 Ibn al-Qayyim, 83, 96.  
 Ibn Sa'd, 69.  
 Ibn Taymiyyah, f 32, 83  
 —, His views about the function of prophethood, 41.  
 Intellect, Intuitional, Limitations of 24, 25, 26, 29, 32.  
*Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* f11.  
 Iqbal, Dr. Muhammad, 19, 35, 83, 87, 97.  
 Islam, al-, 55, 56, f 35.  
*Islam at the Cross-Roads*, 57, 82.  
*Islamic Law and Constitution*, f 93.  
 'Iyad, Qadi, 77.

## J

James, William, f 27, 28.  
 Jehovah, 89.  
 Jerusalem, 8.  
 Joad, C.E.M., 21.

## K

*Kalam, formalism of*, 32.  
 Kant, E., 7.  
*Kashf al-Mahjub*, 85.  
 Kenneth, Walker, 19, 21.  
 Khatib al-Baghdadi, 70.  
 Khilafah, 91, 92.  
 Knowledge, limits of so-called scientific, 16.

## L

Landau, Rom, f 65, 101.  
 Lecomte du Nouy, f 10, 11, 12, 14, 15.  
 Leibrecht, Walter, 24.

## M

*Making of Humanity*, 98.  
*Maktubat (Epistles)*, f29.  
 Malik ibn 'Uyaynah, f69.  
 Man, his moral consciousness, 21.  
 —, not a mere complex of electrons and protons, 21.  
*Man the Unknown*, f 22.  
 Mankind, its unity, 49.

Margoliouth, D.S., 60.  
*Meaning and Purpose*, 10.  
*Message of the Prophets is the same*, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51.  
*Modes of Thought*, f 18.  
 Muhammad, as a mercy to the worlds, 57.  
 —, as a universal messenger of Allah, 57.  
 Muhammad Iqbal, f 19, 20, 84, 87, 97.  
 Mujaddid Alf Thani, 28  
*Muqaddimah, The*, f 27.  
 Muslim, Imam, 66.  
*Muslim, Sahih*, f 80.  
*Musnad Ahmad*, f 75.  
 Mystic, 28, 29, 35, 38, 39.  
 Mystical experience—its nature and significance, 27, 28, 30, 38, 39.  
 Mysticism, 31, 38, 39.

## N

Nabi, definition of, 32.  
 Natural Science.  
 Nubuwwat, al-, f 32, 41.

## O

Observation—its limitations, 10.  
 Ontologist, 34.

## P

Philosophy—its limitations, 38.  
 Prayer, 14.  
 Principle of Casuality, f 39.  
 Prophet, can bring us into contact with Reality, 20.  
 —, Definition, 32, 38.  
 —, transform his experience into a living world force, 38.  
 Prophethood, ultimate source of metaphysics, ethics and morality, 27.  
 Prophetic consciousness, 32.  
 Prophetic experiences versus Mystical experience, 28, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41.  
 Psychology—its limitations 24.

## Q

Qadianis, 88.  
 Qur'an al-, f33, f39, f40, f41, f42 f43, f44, f45,

f46, f47, f48, f49, f50, f51, f52, f53, f54, f55, f56, f57, f64, f65, f74, f76, f78, 79.

Qur'an, on the mission of prophets, 40.

———, on the significance of prophethood, 39,

Radhakrishnan, f 7.

*Rasa'il al-Qushayriyah*, F 85

Reality, external, 10, 11.

Search for Unseen, 7, 8, 14, 27.

*Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, f 19, 35, f 84.

*Recovery of Faith*, f 7.

Religion, 30, 31.

*Religion and Culture*, f 24.

Religious Experience of a Prophet, 35, 36.

## S

*Shifa*, al-, 77.

Science, 9, 15, 16, 17.

Scope and limitations, 7, 8, 10, 15, 24.

Scientific Methods, 9.

Scientist—their claim, 15, 17.

Self, spiritual, 8.

Sense-experience, 21.

*Shaf'i*, 77.

*Shamail al-Tirmidhi*, 64.

Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, 85.

Shu'bah, 69.

*Society*, f 86

Sovereignty of Allah, 43.

Sprenger, Dr., 69.

*Statements and Speeches of Dr. Iqbal*, f 88.

Sufyan, 69.

Sunnah of the Holy Prophet, 28.

its importance, 80, 81.

## T

*Tafhim al-Qur'an*, f 75.

*Tafsir Kabir*, f 73.

*Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, f 68, 70.

Ta'us ibn Kaysan, 66.

Tawhid, its nature and significance, 41, 50, 52, 75.

Teleologist, 34.

Theism, Aspects of, 8, f 33.

Theocracy, its principles, 91.

Theory of State, the, f 89.

## U

Umar, the Great, 91.

Ummah, 87, 88, 91, 94.

Urge, religious, 8, 9.

## V

*Varieties of Religious Experience*, f 28.

*Visions accompanying prophetic experience*, 38.

## W

Waliullah, Shah, 46.

## Y

Yahya bin Sa'id, 69.

## Z

*Zad al-Maad*, 64, f 96.

Zoroaster, 61.

Zubayr, Muhammad, Siddiqi, f 66, f 68.